

ADDRESS
TO A
YOUNG LADY
ON HER
ENTRANCE INTO THE WORLD.

IN
TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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ADDRESS



TO

BRIDGE INTO THE WORLD

TWO JOURNALS

VOL. I

LONDON

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INTRODUCTION.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,

THE term of that trust which has for some years been delegated to me, is nearly expired. The time is not far distant when the name of Governess shall be no longer mine. But while this heart continues to beat, it will retain its sensibility to all your concerns; your temporal happiness will always affect it, and your eternal felicity will be remembered in its latest supplication. These are my motives in offering you the following pages; should they prove of efficacy to add stability to your principles, to elevate your sentiments, and to guard against every seduction, the purity of your heart, I shall derive from them an earnest of security to much of my own happiness.

INTRODUCTION.

The cause of religion has ever with you sufficient interest to engage your attention : In that sacred cause I write. I shall not flatter you with a promise of novelty ; for I cannot hope to offer any thing new on religion to one who, like you, has been so long accustomed to study and to meditate the sublime truths of Christianity.

Before I enter on this undertaking, permit me to preface it with some general observations. While life is unembittered by pain, sickness, or sorrow, its pleasures or its interests hold the most fascinating influence over the human heart. This influence is apt to obliterate the best impressions of early education, and to enervate the force of religious principle. From the consideration, that these pleasures will now press almost incessantly on your attention, and these interests seem every day more immediately your own, arose the idea of presenting you with this address ; in hope, that by retracing the characters of piety and virtue which are already imprinted on your mind, I shall, with the blessing of Heaven, be enabled to fix them so indelibly there, that you may pass unhurt, through the contagious levity diffused by modern manners over every rank of the community.

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Do not think I am going to trouble you with general censure on the vices of what is called the world; as, in my opinion, virtue is not now declining from any point of excellence, to which it has ever attained; some qualities of the highest value are shining at this day with such a splendid and useful light, that they forbid any one to affirm, there is not, upon the whole, as much goodness in the nation at this moment, as it has ever been blessed with, at any period of its history. We find, among the great, generosity to protect and reward merit, and humanity to feel and to relieve distress; confidence and liberality in the commercial classes; and in the lower ranks, a more rational piety than ever before enlightened the people of this, or any other country. Yet with this conviction, I must affirm, that bad example was never more extensive in its influence than at this moment, owing to the universal predominancy of that abject spirit of servile imitation, which pervades, not only the young and the inexperienced, but those also, whom years and wisdom might be thought to have placed beyond the reach of its contagion.

This base and unmanly spirit of imitation originates from a pusillanimous dread of singularity; by means of which, reason and re-

ligion are awed into silence, and wavering timidity frightened into the paths of folly, of incessant dissipation, and ruinous extravagance. This dread of singularity is, in other words, the fear of incurring the imputation of not knowing what is polite, or of wanting taste to admire, or the means to practise it. Such ignorance, or such inability would be thought to indicate low connections, or vulgar education, or poverty, and would therefore mark those whom they degraded, as unfit for polite society. If numbers sanction conduct, I must confess that levity and folly have the most formidable party. But if the example of greatness conforming to reason and virtue, can protect from the imputation of tasteless ignorance, there is no cause to dread it by refusing to follow the multitude, as it is nothing less than singular in the highest circles of this metropolis, to be regularly pious, strictly conscientious, and actively benevolent. These are the people who can make splendor and gaiety sources of pleasure; because they keep them subservient to reason, and use them with moderation.

There are people on the other hand who imagine that by a sour rejection of amusement, they become examples of superior virtue. Hence like the Pharisee in the Gospel,

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they look with supercilious scorn upon all who are less rigid than themselves. From scenes where elegance and art have prepared faultless gratification for the young, the innocent, and the gay, they turn with seeming horror, thanking God, "that they are not as other men are;" and this they fancy to be virtue; but it is nothing less; it is pride; and such pride is ever the true source of that singularity, which is deservedly regarded with disgust. It is the ostentation of unmeaning strictness, that gives to manners an unpleasant, and forbidding severity, which is unnatural and disgraceful to virtue; and thus, its pretended or injudicious friends become the worst of its enemies. But of this mischievous number those can never be, who, above affecting any peculiarity of behaviour, seek only to be sincerely good. Such are usually even better than they seem.

Think not therefore that I condemn as follies, the innocent compliances of an accommodating spirit; that I confound a fondness for amusement with guilt; or give to weakness the name of vice. So far from inculcating so severe a morality (if morality it may be called) I should be grieved to see your mind possessed by so sour a spirit.

Consider me at this moment, as speaking to a young pilot, venturing on a sea unknown, where under the smooth surface of the glossy wave, rocks and shoals lie hid, on which many a bark has split. I point out the wrecks of misguided folly, or presumptuous pride, to excite your vigilance and awaken caution; that by steering a different course, you may escape a similar fate, and sail on safely to the destined port.

Every season of life, after the years of infancy are elapsed, has duties peculiarly its own, all progressive in their dignity, and consequently in their difficulty too. Those relative to each period, seem as successive exercises; by which powers are gradually acquired, competent to the due discharge of the more arduous obligations imposed by the circumstances of mature age.

The work begins in youth; whose first business seems to be performed without effort, and with infinite delight to itself. This business consists in improving the little stock of ideas, which infancy has imperceptibly caught from the objects of sense that lead us to observe, compare, and inquire. Novelty lends interest to every thing; and the susceptible imagination retains some impres-

sion of every passing form. Very soon the world of ideas is enlarged to a magnitude that requires some governing power to arrange its images, to confirm the good, erase those that are productive of evil, and prescribe limits to such as seem spreading with too great luxuriance.

This power over the human mind is the heaven-deputed privilege of reason, perfected by religion. But, at the period we are speaking of, reason is weak, and religion not understood. Here parental tenderness finds ample room for all its anxious and pleasing exertions: it relieves every present want, and provides for every future contingency. Gradually the task of education becomes more arduous, complicated, and interesting. Its objects are to teach order to the wild imagination, to cast the gentle rein of due restraint upon the impetuous will, to direct anew every propensity, whose bent may tend to evil, to strengthen the principles of native rectitude, to pour on the heart the precepts of generous sentiment, to teach it to revere the dignity of virtue and the purity of religion, and to enable reason to assume that ascendancy over passion, which it was appointed by Providence to hold. What delights attend this labour of love, if the docile spirit, conscious

of obligation, and patient of dependance, is grateful to the hand that guides it; and if, while it expands, it acquires by chearful submission to instructive authority, the most useful part of wisdom, self-command.

The age of maturity presses fast on that of youth, to cut short the theory of education. The Pupil enters now a larger school, that of the World, of which the stern instructress is experience. How different are her lessons to those of maternal tenderness! She teaches not by precept, but by practice: there is the school of action, perhaps of suffering too; at all events the acquirements of preceding years will be put to the strictest proof; and should they be found inadequate to the due performance of the tasks she imposes, heavily falls her Iron Rod upon the hapless practitioner. Her discipline is often severe, but it is always salutary; for it teaches in reality the wisdom we seem to learn in milder schools; and when it cannot induce, it compels attention to the parts assigned us on the great theatre of life. We are all convinced, that, various as are the parts to be filled up in this important drama, the individual has no privilege of choice: yet we are so idly discontented, as to suppose every department more desirable than our own; and overlooking

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that, we are employed in enumerating the blessings of every other lot, or criticizing the performance of every actor but ourselves. How effectually would such levity be repressed, and the sorrows it engenders be avoided by recollecting that whatever be the condition assigned to us, it must be that which is the fittest and the best for our present and future good; because it is appointed by a Being infinitely wise, and infinitely benevolent; and that, however hard its duties may seem, a reward proportioned to their difficulty awaits their due performance.

But short is this busy period of maturity. The scenes, whether grave or gay, of this most important season of our lives, pass quickly by; the infirmities of old age are constantly, though often imperceptibly, stealing upon us, until they have worn away the powers of action. If, however, with its infirmities we have its wisdom also, we shall not think the turbulence of proud desires, the anxiety of eager pursuits, or the anguish of disappointed hopes, ill exchanged for the mild tranquillity, the calm dignity of that season, which precedes the close of mortal existence; for then begins the triumph of a well-spent life: the enlightened mind turns on the past a reverted eye, and draws comfort

inexpressible from the view: it rejoices in the trials it has encountered, in the temptations it has resisted, and in the virtues it has exercised. From this contemplation it looks forward with pious confidence in that merciful being, with whom every action is present, and hails with rapture the near approach of its great reward, an eternity of bliss.

In your life, my young friend, the season of preparation is drawing fast to a conclusion; and in the scenes that await you, this alone is certain, that he who dooms us to trials, does it to exalt our virtue, by giving us opportunities of manifesting our zeal for his service. How that service is best performed, none are of necessity ignorant: the Being who of his bounty gave us existence, has been pleased to favour us with a revelation of our duty, and to display to our view the prize that awaits our toil. In this revelation we are told that life is a warfare, and our faith in these significant words does not suffer a tedious exercise. Soon, very soon, knowledge takes place of belief. We recognize the warfare in our own bosoms, where are held its severest conflicts, conflicts very unlike the shock of armies, whose struggle a few hours terminate; but ours are continual: each day may be crowned

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with victory, and yet the morrow shall demand fresh exertion : for the enemy (to continue the scripture metaphor) is in the citadel, and has his emissaries without, ever seeking to surprise the guard, and throw down the barriers of caution. Thus beset on all sides, with many a propensity of the heart, waiting but the moment of negligence to betray it to the vice or folly that besieges it, security would be ruin : hence our master, the prince, under whom we fight, has commanded us to watch, to be ever on our guard. As a farther incentive to vigilance and exertion, let me observe, that as the christian warfare surpasses in difficulty and duration, that which contending princes wage, so does the remuneration we are promised, exceed in all proportion the highest expectations we can form from the sovereigns of this earth. The glories of men are frail and transitory, the victory of one day is succeeded by the defeat of the next; and the conquests of years are lost in a moment. But the christian prize is unalienable, and its value is beyond all that eye hath seen, or that it hath entered into the heart of man to conceive.

When I speak of the dangers and difficulties attending your spiritual warfare, do not suspect me of conjuring up monsters of the

imagination, to alarm your fears unnecessarily. To your eyes the prospect of life must appear so gay, so variegated with delight, that to believe it perilous, full of sorrows, and full of snares, is to admit an opinion that contradicts your experience of the past, and is wholly inconsistent with your conceptions of the future. Believe me, I would not blot out one pleasureable object that adorns your prospect. My wish is to realize them all, by confirming in your mind, those principles which are the basis of permanent enjoyment. Those who are ever looking on the worst side of things, deserve to find the misery they seek; but while I endeavour to render you fully sensible to the blessings you possess, that you may be truly grateful to the Being who gives them, I would have you remember, that a lot so happy as yours, has fallen to very few. This, you cannot too strongly be reminded, renders it your particular duty, to dispense the means of happiness to all within your reach: nor need I inform you, that there is no enjoyment productive of more luxury to a feeling mind, than that of softening the sorrows from which it is exempted. This is a luxury that may be yours every day; for every day will produce objects of your beneficence, whose hardships will shew you in the strongest light, your own

felicity. The morning sun has shone unclouded on your paths. Blessed with health, surrounded by affluence, and protected by the tenderest care, the common sorrows of early life have been held far from you; while the children of poverty have felt the pangs of many a woe, long before they have numbered half the years that you have lived.

Thousands there are, who draw their earliest breath, where misery has scattered ills, of which you have not even an idea; and long before reason discovers the melancholy truth, the sufferers feel it, in its effects: think of them, and then review your own lot. You will pity their sorrows, and, what is no less their due, you will compassionate their faults and transgressions, when you recollect, that to them the admonitory lessons of virtue are seldom directed, and that the urgency of want is the great exciter to those crimes, of which the wretched are most liable to be guilty.

But remember too that affluence has its poisons, which the infant mind imbibes, at the first dawning of perception. These are subtle mischiefs, slow and insidious in their operations, and, if unresisted, fatal in their effects. Yet, however great may be the temptations, few will excuse the faults born of

prosperity ; and still fewer can pity the sorrows of which they are productive. May your conduct be such, as need not require excuse, as your faults would not be entitled to any extraordinary indulgence ; nor could you expect that their consequences should meet with much compassion : for the Being, who bestowed on you the equivocal benefits of rank and fortune, joined with them a positive good, a blessing of the highest importance, an affectionate parent, under whose influence and care your life has flowed smoothly and innocently through a series of eighteen years. Awaken in your heart, my dear friend, every sentiment, which such favours as you have received, ought to inspire. The time is come, of which every hour will present you with opportunities of manifesting your gratitude ; you have the power of making an ample and all-sufficient return ; a return which may be comprized in few words : it is this, to fulfil to the best of your ability every christian duty : this will not only render you acceptable to God, but also, amiable, respectable, and happy among men.

An inquiry into the nature of these duties, with some remarks on the consequences of the observance, or neglect of them, will be the object of my subsequent considerations.

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The christian religion includes in it the most perfect system of morals that ever was offered to mankind. It is a system of uniform and constant virtue, founded in benevolence, and whose spirit is peace and love. In calling ourselves christians, we virtually promise to be the followers of Christ, that is, faithfully to observe his precepts, and to preserve a steady faith in the promises of his gospel. You have been by baptism, received into a community of christians, at an age when you were the passive subject of a duty incumbent on your parents. The engagements, which were then entered into by your parents or sponsors, in your name, were ratified by you at your confirmation, when your more advanced years had enabled you to comprehend the terms, on which you were to become a partaker of the benefits imparted to mankind by the christian dispensation. But it yet remains to make a more explicit avowal of your profession, by joining in the celebration of that rite, which is performed by most christians in commemoration of the death of Christ. You are now sufficiently acquainted with the nature of that Salvation he died to obtain, to feel the warmest gratitude to him, as the means by which you are made competent to receive, and to God, as the bestower of so inestimable a benefit; you are also pro-

ficient enough in the doctrines and precepts of his Gospel, to resolve and to know how to practise them. If this be your determination, you are fully prepared to approach that table, where the members of our church assemble in remembrance of that sacrifice, which constituted Christ the Saviour of the World; and there, in the presence of Heaven and your brethren, to dedicate yourself anew to the service of God, by devoutly resolving to live according to the precepts contained in the Gospel.

But before I speak on the institution of the Lord's Supper, as the last and concluding covenant between God and man, it will not be improper to lay before you a short compendium of the Sacred History, as far as relates to the several engagements which it has pleased Almighty God to enter into with his creatures. In the Bible you read of covenants, or what may be termed charters, granted by divine benevolence at different periods to mankind. The first we read of, you will recollect, were made with individuals, as were Adam, Noah, and Abraham, &c. They were afterwards extended to a body of people collectively, as the children of Israel; and lastly, all the nations of the earth are offered the benefits of the covenant of the New Tes-

tament, sealed with the blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Were I to define a covenant, I should call it an agreement, wherein are stipulated certain conditions to be severally executed by the contracting parties. If this be so, what an idea of the goodness of the Supreme Being does it impress on our minds, to contemplate that condescension which thus stoops to the weakness of his creatures, and invites them by favour and reward to walk in the paths of rectitude! The conditions of the covenants with which mankind have been favoured, appear to me to have been in spirit uniformly the same, though materially different in the ceremonies annexed to them. Protection and favour, beneficence and mercy, have been promised by God, on the easy and reasonable terms of obedience to his will, rendered with purity, humility, and cheerfulness of mind. Thus, when Adam was created and placed by his Maker in a state of felicity, the perpetuity of his enjoyments was insured to him on condition of obedience to one positive injunction: Adam failed, and with his innocence he lost his Paradise, and forfeited immortality. But God, in his justice merciful, softened the rigour of punishment by a promise to the defaulter, of redemption from the penalty he had incurred for his posterity.

Of Adam's children, two were distinguished from the rest, by characters of opposite descriptions; the one being as exemplary for piety, as the other was detestable for wickedness: the descendants of each severally retained the characteristic vices and virtues of their respective parents. Hence, we are told, two descriptions of people were formed; of which one, from their zeal in preserving the true worship of One God, were called the children of God; and the other, who were abandoned to sin and depravity, were termed the children of men. In process of time the good decreasing, and the corrupt part of mankind becoming in proportion more numerous, a depravity almost universal spread over the whole earth: one family only (the head of whom was Noah) retained that piety, which had procured for the descendants of Seth, the honourable appellation of children of God. Moses the historian of this event, tells us that, "God saw that the wickedness of man" "was great upon the earth, and that every" "imagination of the thoughts of his heart" "was only evil continually." Justly offended by such general desertion of himself, his laws, and his worship, punishment was denounced by God against a guilty world. "And the Lord said," continues Moses, "I" "will destroy man, whom I have created,

“ from the face of the earth, both man and
“ beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls
“ of the air; for it repenteth me that I have
“ made them.” “ But Noah found grace in
“ the eyes of the Lord.” The reason why
favour so peculiar was shewn to Noah, is suf-
ficiently explained in a few very emphatical
words of the same scripture. “ Noah was a
“ just man, perfect in his generation, and
“ Noah walked with God.” In reward of
this man’s singular piety, the Almighty con-
descended to dictate to him the means of pre-
servation from the ruin which was poured on
the earth, and which destroyed every thing
that had life, except those only which were
with Noah in the Ark. When the waters
were subsided, God gave to Noah dominion
over the earth, on consideration of obedience
on the part of himself and his posterity, with
a positive assurance that they should never be
again subject to similar calamities.

Four hundred years had hardly elapsed, be-
fore this awful manifestation of divine wrath
had lost its effect on the minds of those, who
were descended from the family which had
escaped through the mercy of God, a destruc-
tion otherwise universal. But the sense of
calamity and of deliverance seems to have been
lost, with the awe and the gratitude they were

calculated to inspire. The example of Noah, to whose rectitude every man then living owed his existence, was neglected or forgotten; vice was again every where prevalent, one man only retaining his integrity unstained, and his piety uncorrupted. This was Abraham, a man whose character cannot be contemplated without admiration and respect. He alone retained God in his heart; and in return, he was selected by that God whom he served, for peculiar trials; and, being approved worthy, was made the object of blessings and rewards transcending even his unlimited obedience and unshaken faith. "Walk before me, and be thou perfect," said the Almighty God to Abraham, after having separated him from his family, and bade him to sojourn in a strange land: this command, was the condition on the performance of which, blessings innumerable were assured to himself and his descendants. We must be too well acquainted with the faults and infirmities, to which every one is liable, to suppose that Abraham's virtue could attain the perfection to which it arose, without the discipline of sorrow. The sacred history shews us, that the extraordinary blessings accorded to this distinguished Patriarch, were not obtained by negative virtue. His temptations were as strong and his trials as severe, as human nature can be supposed

competent to resist, or capable of sustaining: through a series of events crossed by many dangers and difficulties, his faith was unshaken, his confidence entire: and, at length, his trial was perfected, by obedience to a command that seemed destructive of the means, by which the promises of God were to be accomplished. In the moment of distress the least supportable, when his arm was raised to perform an act, against which reason, conscience, and nature seemed at once to revolt, God declared his obedience approved; and in reward of his sufferings, repeated his promise of future blessings, and the inestimable assurance, that he should be the parent of a redeemer for all mankind. The words of the history are, “and in thy seed shall all
“the nations of the earth be blessed, because
“thou hast obeyed my voice.”

The son of Abraham was Isaac, who seems to have lived a life of virtue and of undisturbed prosperity. Of his children, the youngest was made heir of the promises given to Abraham. This man's life was marked by a diversion of trials, and embittered by many and great afflictions. He had the name of Israel conferred upon him by an Angel or messenger sent from God; whence the descendants of his twelve sons, who formed twelve classes,

were called the tribes of Israel. These people (described in the Old Testament by the name of Israelites, and in the gospel most frequently denominated Jews) were alternately the objects of unparalleled favour, and exemplary punishment, of just indignation, and distinguished mercy. These vicissitudes originated in their crimes; for had they not greatly sinned, their state had been ever prosperous. They were always secure of tranquillity, while they forbore to provoke vengeance. But hardened by that security, which they were promised should be the consequence of virtue, they forgot the terms, and grew arrogant in confidence of the superiority to which they were appointed, as descendants of Abraham. Hence their character seems to have been composed of pride and cruelty: as a religious people, they were without the best attributes of piety, meekness, and charity; at one time by ingratitude and disobedience provoking the wrath of God; at others, vaunting their particular relation to him, and growing presumptuous on those favours which ought to have excited a more ardent piety, and punctual observance of his word. Such appears to have been their national character after their deliverance from Egypt, and the promulgation of the divine law in the deserts of Arabia, prior to their establishment in the

promised Land of Canaan. Four hundred and thirty years after the call of Abraham, it pleased God by a miraculous intervention, to deliver the Israelites from oppression and slavery; and under the conduct of Moses, to lead them to independance and honour.

Previous to their establishment, the Almighty made a covenant with them, and furnished them with a system of laws for their peculiar use. But far from compelling them to accept the conditions of the covenant, or imposing those laws by his authority, he graciously proposed both to them, and left them the freedom of choice, whether they would, or would not, submit to the conditions on which they were to be the peculiar people of God. Upon the message having been delivered, and the assent of the people given to the divine offer, the law was then explicitly declared, and the covenant ratified with the solemnity of a ceremonial prescribed by God himself; and finally, Canaan was subjected to the dominion of Israel. But ill were the terms, on which depended divine favour, observed by the posterity of those who engaged for their performance. Disobedience was ever incurring punishment, and penitence was still followed by pardon and prosperity. But at

length their hearts became impenetrable to the calamities so frequently inflicted upon them.

As no chastisement could awaken in them a sense of their absolute dependance on God, provoked by incorrigible disobedience, the divine wrath burst upon the kingdom of Israel, (including ten of the twelve tribes,) which was entirely extirpated, and its subjects so wonderfully scattered in the eastern countries of Asia, that no trace of them, as a people, is any where to be found.

This awful example of almighty anger failed of its salutary influence on the still remaining tribes of Judah, and Benjamin. In vain did they hear the prophets denouncing the wrath of Heaven against their wickedness; in vain were the predictions of their inspired monitors verified by the powers of Assyria and of Babylon, on the nations that surrounded them. They had long contemned the law, and now they were insensible to the admonitions of the prophets, though they saw their threats executed by the visible instruments of divine justice. The chastising hand of God, when falling immediately on themselves, and taking from them what they most loved, empire and grandeur, was alone capable to rouse them from their vicious se-

curity. Captivity produced repentance. In sorrow and humility they sought God; and after seventy years (the term foretold by the prophets) their penitence reconciled them to favour: they were restored to liberty, and permitted to rebuild their City of Jerusalem, and its temple. But the virtues of the Jews were virtues of adversity. They vanished and were dissipated by the bright rays of prosperous fortune. Little more than four centuries had elapsed, after the Babylonian captivity, when these haughty people becoming tributary to Rome, were eagerly expecting the Redeemer that had been so repeatedly promised to their predecessors.

The fullness of time being come, the sun of righteousness arose, with healing on his wings. The Messiah, as had been predicted, was born of a descendant of Abraham, and appeared at the period, when they were in full expectation of his coming. But how different was this Saviour from the deliverer they hoped to have seen! Unfortunately for the Jews, they had misunderstood the prophecies relative to the Messiah: too proud to think themselves under the dominion of sin, they believed that in their Redeemer they should behold a temporal prince, great in arms, who should deliver them from the power of Rome,

and restore them to empire, or rather raise them to a grandeur superior to the rest of the world. The birth, life, manners and doctrines of Jesus Christ, but ill accorded with these dreams of pride and ambition. They were particularly offended by the spiritual equality inculcated by his precepts, and enforced by his example. A religion purely spiritual, that dispensed with the Jewish ceremonies (though it professedly confirmed the moral law) seemed to be a blessing extended to all mankind, and was therefore regarded with contempt by the generality of these people; who considered every thing as beneath their acceptance, which could be enjoyed by the Heathens.

To the Heathens, then, was the light of revelation dispensed, and the terms of salvation offered. All the nations on earth (the descendants of Abraham excepted) are described in scripture, by the term Gentiles; and are called in the prophetic language, "a people who sat in darkness." Indeed, the most enlightened of them had no guide but reason, whose imperfect glimmerings of truth were mixed with prejudices, imbibed from, or excited by, a fabulous mythology; and the multitude were regarded by the philosophers, as beings that had only the human figure, to

distinguish them from the brute creation. To the despised and neglected multitude, the religion of him "who was anointed to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, "was highly acceptable." But the people, among whom the Messiah was born, they who had expected him for so many ages, were enraged at his humble appearance. Regarding him as an impostor, they seized and accused him before the Roman Governor, and insisted on his being crucified. Thus forfeiting those high privileges, which had been theirs for so many ages; and incurring heavy and long-continuing affliction. In less than fifty years after this atrocious act of cruelty, its perpetrators were overwhelmed by a series of the most dreadful calamities recorded in history. The entire destruction of Jerusalem, and of the Jewish State, was followed by the dispersion of the Jews themselves, who now live in every civilized nation, like the descendants of Ishmael; their hand against every man, and every man's hand against them: until it shall please God to convert them to his worship, as preached by Jesus Christ; this unreasonable animosity (though unfelt by the good, whether Jew or Christian) will ever subsist.

But let us not, in regarding the abject state of the Jews, and acknowledging the justice of that God, who sees good thus to humble them, forget the lesson their sorrows hold out for us: let us remember, that if the peculiar, the chosen people of God have been abandoned for faults, which sprung from the presumption they founded on Abraham's merits, we shall no less incur danger by a supine dependence on the merits of Jesus Christ. I have endeavoured to lay before you an abstract of those covenants, which it has pleased God to make with his creatures, for the purpose of shewing, that every promise of divine favour has been conditional; and, that without performance of those conditions on the part of the creature, there is no hope of favour, but in the mercy of the Creator. But we see by the example of the Jews, and we are assured by the immutable word of God himself, that it ever follows repentance attended with sincerity and humility: that benign and merciful spirit, which was exemplified in the Jewish theocracy, may be reasonably considered, as a revelation of what must take place in the moral government of the world at this day. Purity, piety, and benevolence, may constantly rely upon divine favour; while immorality, irreligion, and unfeelingness, must be offensive to the Deity, and will incur divine

wrath. Let us not then, like the Israelites, harden our hearts against that voice, which offers us pardon and peace on condition of penitence and amendment, which promises to a continuance in well doing, eternal life, and everlasting bliss. Let us rejoice in that gospel which opens the prospect of these blessings; and let us, by a faithful observance of its precepts, render ourselves worthy partakers of the benefits held out to mankind, by the divine preacher of that gospel. This leads me to speak more particularly of that sacrament, which Christ declared should be a testimony to the world, of the sacrifice he made for its redemption.

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper, is a rite celebrated in obedience to the precept, and in memory of the example and death of Jesus Christ: the time and manner of its institution are recorded by St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke, in their several gospels. These, you know, were three of the disciples who ate the last supper with their master, on the night that he was betrayed to the Jews. They are undoubted evidence of the injunction which they received with the emblematic bread and wine, from Jesus Christ. St. Paul also, who was not converted to Christianity till two years after the death of its au-

thor, not only confirms the account given by the three evangelists, in his adoption of the ceremony, but by his explanation of the design, for which it was instituted, he gives us to know in what light the early Christians were taught to consider it; and has given us a rule, by which we may regulate our ideas on this important subject. We may therefore presume to hope that, when founded on such authority, they will be consistent with the spirit of that religion, of which the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is the peculiar and the characteristic ceremonial. St. Paul, in the passage alluded to, after a very severe reproof of the excesses committed by the converts of Corinth, in their communion, proceeds to explain the origin and design of the rite they had presumed to abuse. "For I
"have received of the Lord," says he, "that
"which I also delivered unto you; that the
"Lord Jesus, the same night in which he
"was betrayed, took bread; and when he had
"given thanks, he brake it and said, take,
"eat, this is my body, which is broken for
"you; this do in remembrance of me. Af-
"ter the same manner also, he took the cup,
"when he had supped, saying, this is the
"New Testament in my blood; this do ye,
"as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of
"me." The apostle adds, of his own autho-

INTRODUCTION.

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rity, as an illustration of the order for the repetition of the last supper, “ for as often as “ ye eat this bread, and drink of this cup, ye “ do shew the Lord’s death, till he come.” It will hardly be necessary to observe to you, my dear friend, that it is not going to the altar, and receiving the consecrated elements, which is discharging the duty of communion; but that it is the disposition of mind, with which we perform this sacred ordinance of our Redeemer, that constitutes us his disciples; and that it is only the influence which the remembrance of his life, doctrine, and death, have upon our morals and conduct, that can render his sacrifice the means of our salvation. External ceremonies are nothing; and a mere external compliance with the ceremonies of religion, is worse than nothing; it is a mockery of the Being in honour of whom they are instituted; it is what is described in scripture as drawing nigh to God with the lips, but having the heart far from him: what is incumbent upon us, is a fervent and heartfelt observance of every divine institution, whether moral or ceremonial; as such observance is to accomplish some of the conditions, on which it has pleased the parent of the universe to grant us his favour.

You have seen, that the celebration of the

Lord's Supper is rendered, by the command which Christ gave to his disciples, an act of religious obedience; and it is an obedience that obtains a very sensible reward even in the moment when it is rendered. You will readily believe, my dear friend, that the performance of a rite, which commemorates the great sacrifice made for the remission of our sins, must in hearts susceptible of gratitude, excite the most agreeable sentiments of affection for him who laid down his life for our sake. Nor does the advantage, or the pleasure terminate here. Reverence for the Creator cannot subsist unaccompanied by benevolence for our fellow-creatures. This we never fail to experience, when engaged with a congregation in offices of piety: now the communion is one of those offices which dilate the heart with that liberality and benevolence, which are the best characteristics of Christianity: "by this shall men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." The grateful communicant glows with a warm philanthropy, that takes in all mankind; he looks around on those, who are assembled to partake of the same elements, and to implore the same benefits which he is soliciting, as brethren who have a divine claim to his affection. The illusive distinctions arising from rank and fortune are lost in higher considerations. An

affectionate interest is felt in the welfare of every suppliant that bends before the common father of all ; and the celestial precept that binds us in love to each other, acts with additional influence.

Before I offer my sentiments on the subject of preparation for this office of piety, permit me to say a few words on the difference of opinions among Christians respecting the manner of celebrating the Lord's Supper, with a view to guard you against any uneasiness on the subject, should they be brought before you. You have heard that disputes are maintained with a warmth and acrimony very unbecoming the Christian character, on the mysterious signification of the Lord's Supper ; on the effect wrought by consecration upon the bread and wine ; on the partial distribution of the cup ; and the posture of body in which the sacrament ought to be received. You will readily perceive that none of these things are essential to our faith in the gospel, to our hopes of salvation through Jesus Christ, to our grateful remembrance of his death, or to our moral conduct in life. You will see that the relations of the evangelists are simple and not perplexed with any of these difficulties and distinctions ; and you will be thence convinced, that they are not points on which you

ever need employ your thoughts, should they be discussed in your presence.

These in truth, are subjects little deserving of your attention; controversy being the last thing I would advise you to seek. Society is only interested in our actions: the individuals of that society in which we live, have indeed an undoubted right to examine and pass sentence on what may affect their own happiness; but for our faith, it is not liable to the cognizance of erring mortals; that Being to whom every thought of our hearts is present, can alone be competent to judge them. You must be sensible that you have a right to think as your reason and your comprehension of the gospel incline you; and you must be equally sensible, that this right is not exclusive in you, or in those who concur with you, in their tenets of belief, or mode of worship. The same voice, the voice of reason, that declares it yours and mine, pronounces it the unalienable privilege of every Christian. Let us then, my dear friend, be sedulous to guard our minds against that unfortunate error, which often infects the principles, and narrows the views of people otherwise very sincerely good. What I allude to, is that daring spirit of bigotry, which presumes to determine what particular sect is the favourite of Heaven;

and to denounce the terrors of divine vengeance on all who differ from it in faith or in practice. This is a spirit, which cannot be too cautiously avoided; for it is not only adverse to the virtues that render individuals amiable, and society happy, but is at enmity with Christianity itself. "Ye know not what spirit ye are of," said our Saviour to his disciples, when heated by a false zeal, they proposed calling down fire from Heaven on the poor ignorant creatures who had expelled them from their city. Let us undeviatingly imitate that spirit of meekness and gentleness, which is incumbent on the true disciples of Christ; and if we should unhappily feel in ourselves a disposition to intolerance, let us subdue it by remembering that we are all liable to error. If in sincerity of heart we seek to make the gospel precepts the rule of our conduct, and its promises the basis of our hopes; if we study to avoid evil and to do good, we shall have little leisure, and less inclination to arraign those, who from difference of education, or through conviction, cherish prejudices unlike our own.

In regard to the preparation for the Lord's Supper, so usually recommended, it seems to me hardly possible that one person should determine for another, what kind of preparation

is most efficacious, or whether any preparation be necessary. In offering you my opinions on the use or expediency of preparation, I must therefore be understood to do it with the utmost diffidence: let them have no farther influence on you, than your own judgement of their agreement with reason and religion may determine you to allow them. Of this only I can speak with certainty, that every act and every opinion, which tends to throw mystery or terror over this office of piety, is inconsistent with the design of its institution, contrary to every scriptural illustration of its meaning, and wholly opposite to every dictate of right reason. A preparation which would excite in weak people, or in any people, fears of communicating, I should think, very far from being justifiable. Many very pious people maintain, that a Christian should ever so possess himself, as to be a worthy partaker of the sacrament, without more preparation than is necessary for the reverent performance of any other act of religion. To this position I very readily assent, and doubt not there are numerous examples of its rectitude. Many, I believe, there are, whose lives and manners are so regular, that their minds and thoughts are ever sufficiently composed and collected, for the instant discharge of every gospel ordinance, with due attention and piety.

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Such minds, however, are not of a very common cast: in general, our thoughts are occupied by temporal objects, which involve them in so many intricate mazes, that they cannot be collected by a momentary effort of the will to any point, especially when an office is to be performed, that demands some continuance of their energy, and an abstraction from those images to which they are so strongly habituated. I, who shrink with disgust from every thing that would render terrific, an institution of mercy, do not think, however, that I am deriving those advantages from communion, which ought to attend it, if I join in its celebration without some previous recollection, some more than common scrutiny into myself. That such a pause may be expedient to many, and detrimental to none, I am inclined to believe, from a consideration of the various circumstances and occurrences incident to the human condition, and of their continual influence over our minds. We live in a world that has many just claims upon our attentions, and many attractions worthy of engaging our affections: it is filled with means of endless enjoyments, which religion not only allows, but approves the use of. Did we yield to its lawful claims only, our thoughts would ever be in our own power; were our affections placed only upon its just attrac-

tions, they would require no restraint; and were our pleasures always derived from enjoyments perfectly innocent, peace of mind, and a conscience void of offence, would leave the heart without a subject of repentance, and render all preparation for any office of pious communion with God, wholly unnecessary. But we have passions, of which excess is the characteristic; these are ever struggling to direct our conduct, to subject us to themselves, and to betray us into pursuits, that reason cannot always approve, any more than religion forbear to condemn. The advantages that must accrue to our moral security, by sometimes extricating our bewildered thoughts from labyrinths of error, detaching them from the illusions which they so eagerly pursue, and raising them from the idols of sense to the eternal author of all good, must strike every mind upon the slightest consideration. Frequent appeals to conscience are an exercise highly salutary to the preservation of religion and morality. For our good is this delegate of Heaven seated within us, and its decisions are ever the dictates of truth. Before this tribunal, it is necessary to pass in review every act of our lives, and every latent movement of the heart from which the action flowed. If this internal judge condemn, our safety can only be found in attend-

ing to its censures, and obeying its injunctions of penitence and amendment. If it absolve, peace follows the decree; and if it approve, the most perfect of human felicity is conferred in its applause.

If consequences such as these result from an inquiry into ourselves, it cannot at any period, or to any person, be an improper exercise; nor ever of more importance, than when made a preparation for communion. But, as before premised, preparation is matter of sentiment, rather than of positive obligation; and let me add, that neither this, nor any other pious exercise, requires seclusion from the world, or its rational amusements. True piety is in every respect opposite to gloomy dejection, and sour severity. The gospel of Christ is termed, and justly termed, "glad tidings of great joy to all people," his own manners were so little severe, that he reproached the Jews with having called him "a glutton, and a wine bibber:" he was at a marriage feast, and there performed a miracle in turning water into wine. His whole deportment shews him to have been no enemy to the rational enjoyments of decent society: we have his express command to his disciples, against external singularity in acts of piety, or rather against ostentation of good-

ness. Conformable to this are the precepts he gave to his followers on alms giving, prayer, and fasting; the latter is particularly applicable to my present purpose.

“ When ye fast,” says Christ, “ be not as
“ the hypocrites, of a sad countenance, for
“ they disfigure their faces, that they may
“ appear unto men to fast: verily I say unto
“ you, they have their reward. But thou,
“ when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and
“ wash thy face, that thou appear not unto
“ men to fast, but unto thy father, which is
“ in secret; and thy father, which seeth in
“ secret, shall reward thee openly.” Can any
words express a more positive condemnation
of that gloomy formality, which some think
essential to piety? I think, therefore, I may
venture to say, that all due preparation for
the highest act of religion, may be made with-
out the least deviation from the common
course of any life which is not vicious. I
do not recommend a ball-room, a card-table,
or a playhouse, as the proper scenes for in-
quiry into ourselves: but we know that amuse-
ment must have intermission, and duty relax-
ation; excess only renders the first injurious
to religion and virtue; and excess would be
dangerous, even in offices of piety. A mind
under the influence of a devotional habit, is

familiar with serious reflection ; and though the chain of religious thought be interrupted by lighter images, it finds neither pain nor difficulty in resuming this chain, if the ideas that should connect it, be not obliterated by those of censurable amusement, or faulty indulgences. It is disuse that makes reflection difficult to beings endued with reason ; and it is sin only, that can render it painful to the enlightened Christian. Where innocence resides, there are hope, peace, and equanimity within, cheerfulness, placidity, and benevolence without : may these, my dear friend, with every other amiable qualification, constantly enliven your heart, and adorn your manners ; and then you may, with or without preparation, frequently and worthily join in the celebration of that pious ordinance, which is of perpetual and universal obligation ; being intended to renew in your mind a lively sense of the duties you owe to God, to your fellow-creatures, and to yourself.

On some of these duties I propose to speak in the following pages. To say all that might be said on subjects of such high importance, I do not presume to hope ; but you will have my genuine sentiments, given with sincerity of affection, and in anxious solicitude for your welfare. Should they be effectual to the

preservation of your principles, or should you derive from them one motive to piety or virtue, of which you were not before possessed, I shall esteem the time that may be occupied in their communication, happily employed.

On reading the Scriptures, as the only Means of acquiring Knowledge of the Duties which the Creature owes to the Creator.

AFTER what has been said, my dear friend, on the necessity of religious principles, as the foundation of all that is valuable in mind, and respectable in conduct, it seems expedient, that we should inquire what those principles are, how they must be acquired, and from what sources they are derived. On these subjects I will endeavour to give you my opinions as concisely, and as clearly as I can. First, I understand by religious principles, right sentiments of the duties we owe to God, as our Creator, our governor, our benefactor, and our friend. I am well aware, how much may be comprised under this description of duties; as it is self-evident, that every virtuous exertion of which we are capable, is a duty we owe to God, when opportunity allows of, or circumstances demand their being made. But, in the present instance, I do not wish to be understood in so unlimited a sense; my meaning may be confined to those sentiments or habits of the mind, which result from the contemplation of the divine attributes, and

of the various relations in which, by our nature, we stand with regard to the parent of the universe.

Thus, as the work of his hand, and the creatures of his will, we must entertain of his wisdom and his power a sense of the most reverential admiration. An entire submission, and an obedience unlimited should be felt in every thought, and expressed in every act to him, who is our omnipotent governor, and gracious lawgiver. The heart that contemplates in God the benefactor, by whom is bestowed, not only all that it possesses of good in this world, but the hopes also of a happier existence in an endless futurity, must glow with the warmest gratitude towards him. Submission, reverence, and awe, are the sentiments naturally excited by the contemplation of such an object as the Deity. The conceptions formed by the profoundest study and sagacity of man, relative to the Supreme Being, and to human nature, seem to unassisted reason, utterly to discountenance all idea of any visible intercourse, or direct communication between them: unenlightened by revelation, reason experiences no other sensations than of the most absolute dependence, and of the deepest respect, not unmixed with fear.

But to the Christian, God is not only revealed as infinite in wisdom and power, but also in mercy, and love to mankind. Awe becomes affection, and fear is softened into gratitude, when we learn, that as a father feeleth for his children, so the Father of Heaven feeleth for us: that he condescends to regard with particular care even the minutest of the works of his hand; so that a sparrow does not fall to the ground without him; and that to the beings whom he hath formed after his own image, and endued with reason, he is full of benignity and tendernefs. We are animated by the assurance, that God, who is the bestower of all good, is continually attentive to our welfare, watches over our progress through life with the most paternal solicitude, guarding us against the consequences of our frailties and infirmities, assisting us with his grace against the commission of iniquity, and extending his mercy to those who repent of their committing it. We no longer view him as a severe master whom we obey through mere terror; nor as a rigid judge distributing justice without mercy. We behold a father and a friend, whose benevolence excites in our hearts the warmest sentiments of affection. This is the highest and the best of our religion; it is a compliance with that precept,

which the gospel solemnly declares, the first and great commandment.

Easy and pleasant, as is the observance of this precept, to love God, or in other words, to be grateful for the benefits he bestows, it is not enjoined without promises of rewards to our obedience, that must awaken our hopes, and engage our passions on the side of duty. He that gave us our feelings, knows that they are much more affected by a lesser degree of good or evil which is near, than by advantages or detriments of a much larger magnitude that seem removed to some distant period. In pity of our infirmities, therefore, it is not future felicity only that is the assured return of our love; but we are promised even present remuneration, accruing from every circumstance, even those, which to our short perception may seem to be evil; for we are told, "that all things work together for good, to those who love God." It is surely a promise highly gratifying to our feelings, that the retribution of a happier state, with all that is truly estimable in this life, shall be ensured to us, on the condition of our making the best, and most benevolent of Beings, an object of that sentiment, which gives to the mind it occupies, the most exalted pleasure of which humanity is capable.

Another subject of gratitude to God, and gratulation to ourselves, is the consideration, that this promise includes the whole human race. All cannot obtain the honours of their country, partake of its riches, or exercise those powers that confer dignity; we are not all endued with splendid talents and exalted genius; nor can many, even of those whose abilities entitle them to preeminence and distinction, attain to that degree of reputation to which they justly aspire. But every rational being can love benevolence, goodness, and mercy; and these are such constituting attributes of the Deity, that to love them is to love God.

That exalted sentiment of the mind, which is comprized in the injunction to love God, is not, however, a torpid inactive acquiescence in the divine will; nor yet, is it the zeal that ferments into enthusiasm. It is not the sour spirit of the pharisaical devotee, nor the exuberant professions of a heated fanatic, that are testimonies of that love. Far less can cruelty and oppression be the fruits of such a sentiment. Yet they who condemn and persecute, or wish to persecute every one whose opinions differ from their own, profess themselves to be actuated by the love of God. The wild enthusiast, following the impulse of a

heated imagination, and lost to social duties, tells us, the love of God impells him to waste his life in wandering from place to place; thundering out the vengeance of Heaven against things and actions the most innocent; and infusing into the weak and the ignorant, sentiments of the Deity; that instead of the most benevolent and merciful, describe him as the most vindictive and inexorable Being. Ages past have been stained with the most dismal tragedies, to manifest the love of God, by which the actors in these scenes of horror, professed themselves to have been influenced. Under this fatal impression have Europe and Asia been deluged with blood; and it has in latter times, been made the plea for carrying carnage and desolation through the finest countries of South America.

It may be said, that religious zeal in these instances, was no other than the cover of ambition and avarice; and, that we should ascribe to these passions, the mischiefs which took place under the poor pretence of extending Christianity. In many cases, this censure may be just; but, let it be remembered, that numbers of those who dispensed misery to their fellow-creatures, might and did believe, conformably to what their teachers told them, that they were doing God service; and

thus by their mistaken love of him, they were impelled to the most atrocious cruelties.

To us who have truer ideas of religion, the absurdity of extending its influence by actions directly opposite to every precept it inculcates, must be manifest. Hence we are more willing to impute to the pride of conquest, than to error, the violences committed by the European Princes. How the pure light of the gospel was obscured during the centuries, that were stained with the dark tragedies of fanaticism and superstition, is not, however, a subject proper for discussion here. The knowledge that such things have been, ought to excite in us a more ardent gratitude for the superior advantages which we enjoy, from being born in an age and country, wherein the terms of salvation are open to the consideration of all alike, who can read their native language; and where liberty of choice and determination, is the privilege of every individual.

The review of those errors which have subsisted, and of those which have still possession of very good minds, ought to preserve our tempers in charity with all who differ from us in modes or in sentiments of religion, in order to judge with candour of others, and with diffi-

dence of ourselves. Thence will arise a more active diligence in learning our duty, and a stricter fidelity in the practice of it. We have an infallible guide to every virtue, if we choose to obey its dictates. The will of God is that infallible guide of action, which is entitled to implicit obedience; but, to render this obedience as we ought, it should be conformable to the spirit of those laws we seek to fulfil. The knowledge of those laws, of the spirit they breathe, and of the conduct that is conformable to them, must be acquired by a regular and attentive study of the book in which they are contained. It seems, therefore, impossible for us to discharge the obligations incumbent on us as Christians, if we neglect to consult those sacred oracles, through which the Sun of Righteousness has transmitted to us the light, that shines to direct us through ways of pleasantness, and in paths of peace to everlasting life.

You may believe, my young friend, and not without reason, that you have made no mean proficiency in the study of your Bible. You have been accustomed to read it with regularity and attention; but, it was the attention of mere youth: completely to understand its precepts, and estimate its value, it should be made the study of riper years.

The will of God, which ought to be the sole rule of our actions, can only be found in those declarations of it, recorded by the writers whom he inspired for the benefit of mankind; and who were authors of those compositions which are called by way of preeminence, the Scriptures. To those Scriptures, then, must you pay strict attention and deference through the whole of your life, as in them is the knowledge that shall make you wise unto salvation; and to them I refer you for information on every article of your duty. Here let me premise, that though I may venture to give you my opinion on many of the duties of Christianity, and to express my own sense of scriptural ordinances and passages, I would wish you ever to keep in mind, that it is not my interpretations of the Scriptures, on which you can depend with certainty: it is the Scriptures themselves, in which are the words of eternal life, and those I recommend to your examination.

Adopt therefore no opinions, which you do not believe consistent with your Bible. Let no human authority be placed in competition with that of the inspired writers; compare the sentiments I offer to your consideration with the written word of God; and, if in your apprehension they should differ from that,

do not hesitate to reject them, and to admit that interpretation only which on a due examination shall appear to you the best founded. By adhering to this method, your mind will be preserved from the visions of superstition and bigotry on one hand, and from the comfortless uncertainty of infidelity on the other. In your Bible, then, you possess an antidote to two of the most fatal poisons of human virtue, and of human happiness, superstition and infidelity.

In the dark ages of ignorance, which preceded the reformation, and even after that happy commencement of religious liberty, the human mind was frequently debased by superstition, contracted by bigotry, and corrupted by the contentions of a malignant zeal, falsely called, or weakly believed to be, religious. But of this age, which is with truth called enlightened, the opposite extreme of infidelity is the commoner, and therefore the more dangerous, evil. But let it not be imputed to science, that men are unbelievers; nor let it be supposed, that the affectation of despising revealed religion, is any mark of superior talents; or, that the happiest ridicule that wit can throw on its evidences, is any indication of superior intelligence. To mention only one instance, is sufficient to destroy such an erroneous belief. The greatest abili-

ties that have dignified mere human nature, shone in Sir Isaac Newton; and he was indisputably a Christian.

It would be far from my wish, were it in my power, to trace here the causes of infidelity; they are almost endless in variety, often very obscure, and not always discernible, but in their effects. Many there are, I doubt not, who have been entangled in the snares of infidelity, while they have supposed themselves searching for truth; of such the case is truly pitiable. Others there are, of whom pride and affectation are the welcomed seducers; and of such there is little hope. The dispositions by which they are misled, destroy the feelings, blind the judgement, and pervert that reason whose all-sufficient power the Infidel so loudly extolls. Though pride and affectation have made many an unbeliever, yet, they are not the sole causes of unbelief. To the young enquirer, the unguarded reader, danger is often imminent, when the enemy is supposed afar off: the Infidel, zealous to make profelytes, ever restless and dissatisfied with the dreary path he pursues, eagerly wishes to engage companions in his journey, either by their numbers to dissipate the frequently returning glooms of terror, or to animate his courage by partaking of his danger. But he

well knows that reasonable beings do not run into obvious destruction. He therefore studies to win regard by a shew of candour and liberality of thinking, while he diffuses the infectious mischief by indirect and unsuspected ways. Sometimes it gains admission to the heart, disguised in the fairy garb of poetry, or is mingled with the instructive lesson of history: but its boldest attack is made under the specious veil of false philosophy. Many a conquest the Infidel thus secures; and many a victim is thus cruelly despoiled of his peace, robbed of his hopes of Heaven, and thus chained down to the miseries of life, without one prospect of comfort to console him for present difficulties, and deprived of all expectation that reward shall crown the toils of virtue. Let us turn from these scenes of perplexity and sorrow, to contemplate the Christian's security and joy. Fraught with a conviction of that mercy which forms the gracious scheme of Christianity, the mind is armed against every insidious foe to its tranquillity, and vigorously repels every principle tending to infidelity, however artfully inculcated, or warily disguised. In order, therefore, to secure internal tranquillity, your Bible is the rock on which you must establish your faith, on which you must raise your hopes, on which you must rest your security from

every danger, and your support in every difficulty. It is in that volume you will learn to slight the sorrows of this world by a contemplation of an endless futurity of glory, and there it is you will learn upon what terms you may ensure to yourself that happy state.

I hope, my young friend, that in contemplating the duties incumbent on the profession of the Christian faith, you are not insensible how mild and equitable divine goodness has made its various requisitions. They are not the rigorous injunctions of a tyrannical master, imposed on his slaves in the pride of power, and from the best performance of which arises only an exemption from punishment. They are the just commands of the good and the wise governor of the world, who has appointed to every child of his providence, a due portion of labour, with an assurance, that their future felicity shall be proportioned to the fidelity with which they perform the task assigned them. It is clearly evident there was an absolute necessity, that with creatures constituted as we are, the benefits of a covenant of mercy should be, as they are in the Christian covenant, conditional: otherwise, virtue had been left without impulse, and vice without restraint; as hope of reward, and fear of punishment, would

have been lost in the certainty of eternal happiness. For though much has been said of the love of virtue, for the sake of its own intrinsic loveliness, I am not inclined to believe, that such an attachment would be powerful enough to withstand the rage of impatience, the cruelty of revenge, or the malignity of envy, when the impulses and instigations of these passions were met by opportunity. The superior excellence which many Christians have obtained over the brightest Heathen characters, is to be ascribed to the operations of those hopes and fears, to which the latter were strangers. No one can ascertain, but we may certainly presume, that a very considerable portion of that justice, humanity, and charity, which at present subsist amongst us, arises from the influence which the threats and promises of the gospel have obtained over the mind of every Christian, from the monarch to the lowest of his subjects. Let us then, while we supplicate the grace of God, in aid of our endeavours to fulfil the terms of our salvation, be truly grateful, that he has been pleased to make it conditional on our obedience to his will; since we are thereby led to a degree of perfection in virtue, to which we had not aspired, but for the incitement of his love, and the dread of his displeasure.

I

THE SCRIPTURES.

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We have still additional cause of gratitude to God, for that sublime morality delineated in the gospel ; a morality, of whose perfect purity the best and wisest Heathens could form no idea. On comparing the doctrines of the most enlightened Heathen philosophers, with those of the New Testament, it is ever found, that none are so well calculated to exalt human nature, to amend the heart, to subdue the passions, to elevate the sentiments, or, in one word, to induce purity of mind, and rectitude of conduct, as are those that were taught by Christ and his disciples. There it is, we may learn the wisdom that is from above, " pure, peaceable, gentle, full " of mercy and good works." Nor is it by promise alone, we are animated to the pursuit of virtue; nor by precept alone, we are taught the way which leads to its attainment. We have promises of inestimable value ; and we have precepts such as man never spoke : but we have, superadded to these, the brightest luminary to guide us. The only example of perfect excellence which has appeared upon earth, is given to the Christian, as a model by which he may know and copy true and complete virtue.

The gospel history contains descriptions of the manners, and details of the actions of

Christ, which are sufficiently minute to give us a very clear and comprehensive view of his character. A character, that he himself proposes to our imitation, accompanied by a tender exhortation to become his followers, for the security of our own happiness. Every command of Christ is a law of universal authority; and when we are bidden to "learn" of him, we are laid under an indispensable obligation to impress on our minds, and to render in our lives an image (though necessarily imperfect) of his sublime virtues. Were it not for our own experience of the contrary, we might conclude, that a rational Being, animated by such promises, taught by such precepts, and encouraged by so great an example, and such powerful exhortations to seek his felicity in its imitation, must be far, at least, from negligence in the performance of so reasonable a duty. But unhappily, the negligence of mankind in their most important concerns, is obvious, however highly alarming when we reflect on its consequences.

It is not that our hearts are naturally hard, or our understandings impenetrable to the sense of our obligations. But the world seizes our affections; and its cares or its pleasures, are still effacing impressions of better things.

The world has certainly in many respects a lawful claim to our affections ; and we have a clear right to the enjoyment of its comforts and innocent pleasures. Yet we are seriously warned to keep ourselves unspotted from the world. As this admonition cannot imply a necessity of seclusion from society, it can mean no more than that we should honestly and conscientiously discharge the several duties we owe to each other ; the neglect of which, by rendering us unworthy members of society, casts a stain upon our character, and covers it with guilt and infamy, both in the sight of God and man. This undoubted propriety of being amidst the world, recalls us to the consideration of him who dwelt in the midst of men without sin ; who went about doing good, in the simple, but emphatic, words of the gospel ; who left us his example to follow, and whom we are bound to imitate from every motive that sound reason can suggest, and his own command in force. God, as the giver of all good, must necessarily delight in the welfare and the happiness of his creatures ; he has given us an infinity of innocent gratifications, and capacities formed to enjoy them : it cannot therefore be his will, that we should reject the pleasures which are found in society.

I am by no means convinced that seclusion from the world is not in itself wrong, and unacceptable to the Deity. It seems to me an indication of that cowardice, or that indolence, by which the servant in Scripture was induced to wrap his talent in a napkin, that it might be ready at his Lord's return, without incurring the various risks that might attend the endeavours to augment it, by employing it in business, or in the uncertain channel of commerce. With the remarkable decision of Christ on this cautious indolence, we are well acquainted. Though I would ever deny that retirement is necessary to virtue, yet, if there were no possibility of evil without the verge of social intercourse, the recluse might be allowed to have chosen the safest part; though he could by no means be entitled to any praise on the score of merit. But, certain it is, that solitude has its snares, hardly less dangerous, and its delinquencies, hardly less numerous, than are found in the frequented paths of life. If we contemplate a person without employment that demands exertion, and who denies himself the innocent pleasures of social intercourse, we shall readily agree, from the visible effects of seclusion on his mind and manners, "that it is not good for man to be alone;" and that there are assuredly sufficient means of preserving the

mind, "unspotted from the world," even amidst the scenes of its business, and its pleasures.

I will now conclude this admonition of the necessity diligently to peruse the Scriptures, with a motive to which you ought particularly to attend. Your birth has stationed you in one of those ranks of society, which are from various circumstances superior to the generality. To these ranks are annexed many marks of distinction; which, as they attract notice from a wider circle, so they suppose responsibility to a greater number of spectators, than can or will take cognizance of undistinguished individuals. Your attention to your conduct, then, is a duty you owe to the community, under obligations proportionally stronger, as your situation in life renders you more visible and conspicuous. Your education, your habits, and connections, are all favourable to a character and conduct suited to your rank. The sentiments of religion are imprinted on your mind; but, to make them apparent in your life, they must be sunk deep in your heart, lest they should be lost in the quick succession of new impressions. This is only to be effected by frequent reading of the Scriptures, which confers a strength and permanency on religious sentiments, as essential

to happiness, as to piety. Through such a habit, the pleasurable reflections on a happy futurity, that become familiar to the mind, obviate effectually the undue influence of sublunary objects. Nor is it merely on such account, I recommend the Bible to your frequent attention. I esteem it, also, an inexhaustible source of the purest, the most interesting, and the most important instruction. The more you study it, the more it will be endeared to your heart; but, that your understanding may be enabled to appreciate it rightly, the study must be continued through those years, in which reason shall have attained its full maturity.

When the rules of your grammar had been learnt by rote, the books that contained them were laid aside, as being no longer necessary to your improvement. Forms of speech, and idioms of a language when once known, are fixed indelibly in the memory. That cannot be forgotten, which is always in use; and there is little danger amidst the refinements of fashionable life, that youth should fall into remissness, where error would be stamped with the odium of vulgarity. Conformably to this, were an observance of the rules of piety and virtue made an accomplishment essential to politeness, those rules would ever be present

to the memory ; whereas, they are first neglected, and then forgotten ; merely, because they are not insisted upon, as qualifications indispensably necessary in elegant society. Solecisms in morals, are unhappily not considered as characteristics of vulgarity ; and, however guilty of these, an individual who distinguishes himself by brilliant thoughts, purity of language, and good breeding, receives countenance from the great, the learned, the polite, and the accomplished. Had purity of morals so powerful a patronage, arguments were unnecessary to induce you to bestow on your Bible, a due share of attention ; for it must, in the case supposed, be the general study, and the universal mirror of fashion. But as you and I may not live to see such a revolution, I must seek aid to my arguments from other authority, lest you, like many other young people, should suffer your Bible to rest in oblivion, with your discarded school books. On the advantages accruing from an early intimacy with the Scriptures, I will insert here the opinion of a writer, who was a scholar, a hero, and a Christian : the propriety of applying this character to St. Paul, you will not, I think, dispute. This accomplished apostle, in his letter to Timothy (a young man who was his friend and disciple) after expatiating on the

vices which then prevailed, exhorts the youth to perseverance in virtue, on his own conviction of its importance, derived from his acquaintance with the Bible. He then explains to his friend the origin of the Scriptures, and the purposes for which they have been dispensed to mankind. "All Scripture," says he, "is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for conviction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to all good works."

Of the importance of studying the Scriptures, these words bear ample testimony. They supply us at the same time with a criterion, by which we may determine, whether the sacred oracles have produced their due effects on our minds, by suggesting such interrogatories as the following: "Have I thoroughly imbibed the spirit of Christianity? Am I duly acquainted with the moral and religious obligations annexed to my situation in society? Am I prepared to bear prosperity with moderation, and acknowledge it with gratitude? Is my mind armed with sufficient resolution to resist every temptation, and combat every propensity to evil?" Has it, through requisite study and application, acquired the happy convic-

tion, that all the dispensations of providence are for the good of his creatures; and that we ought to meet adversity with resignation, and without complaint; and, that whether it be for trial, or for chastisement, it must be the best means of producing some desirable advantages? If our conscience does not give unreluctant and unqualified affirmatives to these questions, then we may be assured, that we have still to seek in the Scriptures that frame of mind, which we are told they are designed to produce, and which we are bound to acquire. But the truth is, that even supposing we were able to answer these questions in the affirmative, still we must remain learners; still there will be somewhat of good to acquire, somewhat of evil to correct, somewhat to improve, or somewhat to amend.

“Train up a child,” says Solomon, “in the way he should go, and he will not depart from it.” I am ever ready to depend much on the power of habit, and would be glad to believe, that Solomon’s rule had no exceptions. But experience deserves more regard than theory; and the times we live in furnish too many contradictions of the wise man’s aphorism, to admit an opinion of its infallibility. Education was never perhaps more sedulously attended to than it is at present;

but I cannot say that in general our youth make an adequate return for the pains bestowed upon their improvement.

Let me earnestly entreat you, in conformity to your early habits, to continue through life, to begin the day by an attentive perusal of some portion of Scripture. Then will the first impressions of the mind, be those of wisdom and piety. I need not say how strongly such impressions conduce to the due discharge of every duty, and consequently to the unallayed and remorseless enjoyment of every rational comfort, and satisfaction in life. Err you may even then, and err you must, ('tis the lot of the wisest;) but sin will never obtain dominion over you. The sacred word of God will still awake a salutary regret of every deviation from its precepts; a tender sorrow will operate effectually to wash away the recent offence, and to preserve the mind from farther ill.

These, my dear friend, are some of the important advantages, which an attention to the word of God will infallibly produce: but, let it be remembered, that mere repetition, mere reading of words, whatever wisdom they convey, must be without effect: all the time devoted to study, which is not accompanied

by a sincere desire of improvement, is not only lost, but lost in languor and disgust. I have always observed, that every mental exercise, which does not excite interest, is irksome in performance, and useless in its consequences. It is with sorrow I acknowledge, that the impressions arising from the perusal of holy writ are neither so forcible nor so lasting, as reason and conscience should make them. A very exact description of the different effects it produces on different minds, is left us by our Saviour in the parable of the seed. The infinite diversity of our ideas, and their rapid succession to each other, in our minds, are causes to which may be ascribed the short duration of the best, and noblest sensations, and of the most lively, and most valuable impressions.

It was to remedy this dangerous volatility and unstableness of thought, and to call us nearer to himself, that the wisdom and benevolence of the Supreme Being instituted the Sabbath. This salutary institution, by ordaining a day of rest from our labours, affords leisure to man to enter into himself, and to meditate on those great and weighty subjects that most nearly concern him. The performance of this duty is, or ought to be, in the power of every individual in a Christian coun-

try; and to debar any man from it, reflects a very serious disgrace on those who are instrumental in such ill usage of their fellow-Christians, and upon those who might and do not prevent it.

The cessation from labour appointed by the Sabbath, is the privilege, the Heaven-granted privilege of every creature, that is formed capable of thought. It is even by the bounty of God, and his positive and express command, extended to every animal that labours; and is to all intended as a mercy and a blessing. To the powerful, the opulent, and the dissipated, one day in seven is pointed out for collecting their vagrant thoughts, and raising them to the God who has surrounded them with abundance, and crowned them with distinctions above their fellows. The tradesman, eager in the pursuit of gain, meets in this day a check to his avidity; and is warned to estimate at no more than it deserves, the object of his hopes and solicitude. To the laborious poor, this welcome day brings the grateful vicissitude of necessary rest: even the ox, and the ass, which share their toil, partake with them of the Heaven-appointed remission. How much then, ought such a day to be sacred to pious gratitude! But is it so used? Is this one day in seven spared from

the cares and the occupations of the world, as an interval of religious improvement, that the good seed may take root in the heart, and bring forth its fruits in our conduct? This is a subject on which I am particularly desirous to engage your consideration. I am inclined to believe, that to a contempt of the Sabbath may be ascribed much of that profligacy which sullies the lower, and of that licentiousness, which degrades the higher ranks of life. Of the first, the fault is in a great measure only the misfortune. But, of the last, is it not the shame and disgrace? Here it is we may lament the influence of authority over dependants and domestics, and of example over more extensive circles. How the first is frequently used, and what are the most usual consequences of the latter, we will, if you please, make the subject of inquiry in the next.

*On the Sabbath, its Institution and Design; with
some Observations on the Evils which seem to
flow from a Neglect of its Observance.*

I AM fully sensible that the ideas which I entertain of the Sabbath are in the greatest degree unpopular, and wholly unfashionable. But you, my dear friend, who are no stranger to them, will not be deterred from perusing what I am about to offer you on the subject, by apprehension of its austerity. You are well convinced, that I am ever as sedulous to guard you against the four spirit of bigotry, as to shelter you from the contagious levity of fashionable freedom; considering them as two extremes, which are both widely distant from the mild dignity, and chearful serenity of true religion. But while I think, as I do now think, of the sanctity of the Sabbath, as a religious observance ordained by God, of its wisdom as a moral and political institution, of the benevolence to all created beings, manifested in its design, and while I retain the high sense with which I am now impressed, of the obligations we are all under to regard it with respect, I can never esteem myself justified in omitting this opportunity of

laying my sentiments of this important subject before you. A conviction that the torrent of popular opinion is strongly against the positions I am desirous to establish with you, would doubtless lead my own mind to a diffidence of their truth, were I not perfectly satisfied, that notwithstanding any human opinion to the contrary, however general, they certainly and clearly are founded on the plain and immutable word of God.

The Old Testament teaches us, that the Sabbath was an ordinance of Almighty God, the importance of which was manifested, and the observance enforced by miracle. It is no less evident from the New, that the author of Christianity gave his sanction to the religious appropriation of the Sabbath, by joining on that day with the people assembled in the Synagogue to worship, and read the Scriptures. The Apostles, after the death of their master, continued to assemble themselves one day in seven for devotional exercises; and, though in consideration of our Saviour's resurrection, and subsequent appearance to them on the first day of the week, they constituted that the Christian Sabbath, yet in spirit and design it remains as at its first institution; and is made to the followers of Christ, an observance of peculiar obligation, by his ex-

ample in his life, resurrection from death, and frequent appearance on that day. To the importance of evidences, such as these, my suffrage indeed can add nothing; neither can a world's contempt diminish aught of their high authority. My intention is simply to lay before you a summary of these evidences, and some observations on the giddy scorn, and unjustifiable neglect, with which they are too frequently treated at present by the different orders of our fellow-citizens.

Had the Sabbath been unsupported by better arguments in its favour, than what can be drawn from its high antiquity, its importance might not have engaged me to make it a subject of this address. Yet, on a retrospection of its first institution, I do not consider its having been coeval with the creation of the world, as a circumstance undeserving of respect; and its origin, taken with other relative facts, as recorded by Moses, recommends it certainly to the highest veneration. He informs us, that when God (who thought fit to protract through six days the formation of a world, which he could have called into perfection in a moment) had finished the work of creation, he rested on the seventh day and hallowed it. I do not read of any express precept given to Adam on this subject; but

as the example must have been held out for his imitation, it is not to be supposed, that precept was necessary to enforce his observance of it, while he remained in a state of innocence. When, in consequence of his disobedience, labour became indispensable to the continuance of existence, he would naturally be engaged to rest on the Sabbath, not only by the respect he would feel for it, as an ordinance of God, but by its utility as an interval of solace to the toil of himself and his children. It is reasonable to suppose, that as long as the families of the earth retained God in their knowledge, the Sabbath was neither forgotten, nor neglected. The subsequent corruptions of mankind were probably subversive of all order; and with the light of natural religion was extinguished the worship, that God might have been pleased to demand from Adam and his posterity. But amidst a depravity almost universal, Noah was found a just man, who walked with God, and probably observed with peculiar respect, an ordinance established, and sanctioned by the example of the Being he worshipped. There is a very strong presumptive evidence of this, in the detail of his conduct in the ark.

When the rain had abated he sent out a dove, in hopes by that means, to learn whether the waters had subsided: it returned

on finding every thing overwhelmed but the ark. After seven days Noah again sent the dove; which returning with a leaf in its beak, intimated that the trees were no longer immersed in water. After another seven days, he once more sent the dove out, and concluded from its failing to return, that the flood had now left the surface of the earth. This number of days shews, that Noah measured time by weeks; and the express period that elapsed between each endeavour to learn the state of the flood, being a week, it is most natural to conclude, that he made choice of the Sabbath, a day peculiarly devoted to God, as that which was best adapted to make inquiry, whether the completion of that singular and miraculous deliverance, which had been promised to him, was yet near. That Noah would, with other precepts of duty, transmit to his posterity the tradition of the creation, and institution of the Sabbath, cannot justly be doubted. Of this there is ample evidence in the Mosaic History, drawn from the relation of the miraculous provision of food made for the Israelites in the wilderness; where it is said by Moses to the people, "to-morrow is " the rest of the Holy Sabbath unto the Lord; " bake that, which ye will bake, to-day; and " seeth that which ye will seeth; and that " which remaineth over, lay up for you to be

" kept until the morning: and they laid it up
" till the morning as Moses bade, and it did
" not stink; neither was there any worm
" therein." " And Moses said, eat that to-
" day, which ye gathered yesterday; for to-
" day is a Sabbath unto the Lord: to-day ye
" shall not find it in the field: six days ye shall
" gather it; but on the seventh day, which
" is the Sabbath, in it there shall be none.
" And it came to pass, that there went out
" some of the people on the seventh day for
" to gather, and they found none." In this
relation, and still farther in the context, is
evident proof, that the Sabbath was not newly
instituted; for these events took place before
the promulgation of the law from Mount
Sinai: but that there subsisted at this time,
a known command of God for its observance,
appears from the following verses. " And
" the Lord said unto Moses, how long refuse
" ye to keep my commandments, and my
" laws? See, for the Lord hath given you
" the Sabbath; therefore, he giveth you on
" the sixth day, the bread of two days." In
consequence of the disobedience of some of
the people, who persisted in going to look
for the manna on the Sabbath (which per-
verseness had drawn upon them the angry in-
terrogatory above) God is pleased to renew
the command in explicit terms. " Abide ye

“every man in his place; let no man go out
“on the seventh day.” Evidences of the importance of this command, are the miracles which were wrought to enforce its observance. By miraculous interposition of God, the manna gathered on the sixth day, proved sufficient for the consumption of two days; and there was imparted to it a peculiar quality, through which it was preserved good until the morrow; whereas, what was gathered on any other day of the week, became putrid before the succeeding morning.

It may be supposed, that if the Sabbath was previously known to the Israelites, there would not have been a necessity of miracles to establish it with them as a part of their duty. But we may presume, that though many of them knew the observance of a Sabbath had been part of the religious service of their ancestors, yet to them, it was a duty heard of, rather than practised. During the long oppressions under which the descendants of Jacob laboured in Egypt, they were, it was most likely, compelled to neglect the Sabbath; as every kind of cessation from their toil, seems to have been denied them with the most rigid severity. We know from our own experience, how much the impulses of duty are enervated by disuse. These people

having been long out of the habits of keeping a Sabbath, reluctantly submitted to its observance; and nothing less than a miracle could impress its importance on their hard and intractable minds. Again, when the written law was given to the Israelites from Mount Sinai, the observance of the Sabbath was urged with the most minute exactness; as we see it in the fourth commandment of the decalogue. Thus by example, by miracle, by command given by God himself, was the Sabbath established: and it might be imagined that the dignity of its origin, the importance of the work it commemorates, and the benevolence of its design, were calculated to secure respect, and to excite obedience to the institution, from the latest posterity of Adam. But, to be convinced that the human mind can remain unmoved by such considerations, we have only to look into our own hearts: we shall not then wonder at the perverseness of the Israelites. To a Christian the institution of a Sabbath is particularly endeared by the spirit it breathes: therein are wisdom, justice, benevolence, and compassion, that would in vain be sought among the laws of mere mankind.

Human legislatures hold in their strictest hands the reins of government. Power ever

tends to mislead the judgement, and corrupt the heart : this must have been an evil peculiarly felt before the Christian æra : the pride of power was then unrestrained by any superior authority ; and, in the delirium of the governors, the happiness, the comforts, nay, even the natural rights of the governed, were frequently forgotten, or as frequently torn from them with impunity. Is it to be supposed, that men, untaught by revelation, would from the mere impulses of compassion give a periodical freedom to the slave, and rest to the animals of the lower orders of creation, which were creatures of their will, and the unresisting instruments by which they obtained wealth, ease, and luxury ? And least of all people, were the Jews likely to be the authors of a law so kind, so merciful, and so disinterested ? They were ever an obdurate and selfish people, as was evinced by their conduct in the Arabian deserts, and by the whole of their subsequent history. That the Sabbath was then of a divine origin we can have no doubt. The internal evidences of it are irresistible, if we will attend to them. So well were the Jews convinced of the divine origin of the Sabbath, that they observed it with a strictness almost fanatical ; and in times immediately precedent to their dispersion, they kept it with such unshaken constancy,

that in the extremities of a most rigorous siege, they abandoned all exertion for defence on the seventh day. This is a strong evidence of their conviction, that the Sabbath was a divine institution, though it is not an example for our imitation. Indeed, the history of the Jews furnishes much more of warning, than of example to Christians.

In regard to the Sabbath in particular, they had injunctions for its observance peculiar to themselves, and which are not, like the commands of the decalogue, obligatory on all mankind. The Jewish worship was burthened with a complicated and difficult ceremonial, imposed upon them in particular, for the general good of all the inhabitants of the earth, so long as that earth shall endure. It was chiefly by the peculiar ceremonies of the Levitical ritual, the chosen people of God were distinguished from the Gentiles; and thence, so total a separation was effected, as preserved them from the corruptions of their idolatrous neighbours, and effectually prevented the knowledge of God, which had been revealed to them, from being perverted by a mixture with the Heathen mythology. The absolute necessity of such distinctions becomes apparent, when we consider, that not only the true religion of those ages depended upon them, but that

many of the evidences of Christ's mission, are contained in those sacred books, of which the Jews were the sole depositaries: had their worship been less distinguished from that of the Heathens, they might have formed connections with them, and growing less tenacious of their own privileges, might have guarded with a less jealous caution those Scriptures which had been committed to their care; and which then, would have been less deserving of that implicit faith, with which it is our happiness to regard them. But when all prophecy was accomplished by the coming of Christ, when the perfect law of liberty was dispensed to all the sons of men, there no longer subsisted a necessity for continuing that distinguishing ceremonial, which had been enjoined to the Israelites.

But can we suppose that the observance of a Sabbath, was a part of the abrogated ceremonial? Can the Christian be exonerated from that command, which bids him to shew compassion to the labouring animals of inferior nature? Can the God of universal benevolence, who knows our infirmities, have withdrawn from mankind that tenderness, which was manifested from the beginning, by the institution of the Sabbath? Or can we suppose, he would not, as heretofore, require

from them the dedication of some portion of their time peculiarly to himself? Is it not necessary as a solemn acknowledgement of our dependance upon him, necessary to our acquiring a due knowledge of him and his attributes, necessary to the cultivating those habits, which will render us obedient to his will, and acceptable in his sight? In proof of this necessity, there is certainly all the testimony that example can imply. Though Christ was very far from giving his countenance to that superstitious severity, that unbending strictness, with which the Jews of his time kept the Sabbath, yet it is equally evident that he observed it with the strictest propriety. The bigotry of the Pharisees was in every thing extreme: they seem to have sacrificed to it their regard of every claim upon their benevolence, their charity, or their humanity, and even their sense of every moral obligation; as is evinced by their frequent cavils at the miracles wrought by our Saviour on the Sabbath day.

But if the abuse of things were to be admitted as an argument against them, what good is there in this world, which would escape condemnation? The abuse of the Sabbath was certainly the object of that indignant reprehension, which the Pharisees drew upon

themselves, by their captious objections to the works of mercy performed by our Saviour on that day. It appears, that in the time of our Saviour's being on earth, it was customary for the Jews to assemble in the Synagogues on the Sabbath, to read or to hear the Scriptures read and expounded; and we frequently see our Saviour joining these assemblies. One instance of this is related by St. Matthew, when he describes his master's being interrogated by the Pharisees, "whether it were lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" When he returned, "it is lawful to do well;" and at the same time, restored to health a lame man then in the Synagogue.

St. Mark says, that after much preaching, and many miracles performed, Jesus returned into his own country; and when the Sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the Synagogue. St. Luke explicitly declares that our Saviour was in constant habits of attending the Synagogue, on the day set apart for religion. In describing the declaration of Christ's mission to his townsmen, the Apostle says, that it *was his custom to go into the Synagogue on the Sabbath.*

It is not necessary to enumerate every passage of the New Testament, wherein is men-

tioned our Saviour's teaching on that day, and clearly giving to it his sanction, by employing it in the dissemination of that knowledge, he was appointed to communicate to man. Such passages frequently occur; but you may observe, that they are only found in the relation of some miracle performed: whence it may be inferred, that neither Christ, nor his disciples, esteemed it necessary to enforce by positive precept, or by particular example professedly given for that purpose, the observance of an institution, which was at that time held in the utmost veneration, in even greater respect, than were the obligations to moral duty. But, as not only Christ, but his disciples after his death, justified by their example, the practice of assembling together for seeking improvement in religious knowledge, by reading and explaining the Scriptures, particularly on the Sabbath, so does it point out to us, how we, as Christians, ought to use this day.

It is certainly immaterial, what the day is, which we set apart for acts of piety, if we allow sufficient leisure for such offices, and the time appropriated to them frequently recur. The Christian Sabbath is not on the seventh, but on the first day of the week; changed, as is supposed by the Apostles, in respect to the

day on which the Saviour of the world arose from death ; and in consideration also, of his having frequently appeared to them, after his resurrection, on that day ; which, for those reasons, they denominated the Lord's day. There is no doubt but the Apostles and their Converts, assembled on the first day of the week, to join in the worship of God : the early Christians continued this custom, and every reason subsists for our following their example. The command of the decalogue, which ordains the observance of a Sabbath, describes it as a day of rest from all labour, without particularizing the manner, in which the leisure it affords, shall be employed ; except what is inferred by the injunction to " keep it holy." Independant of the example left us in early times, our reason seems ready to direct us clearly, to what would be an acceptable and proper occupation of a day, set apart to be kept holy.

It plainly tells us, that there is an indispensable necessity for appropriating some portion of our time to the improvement of our minds ; and experience confirms the truth of this reasonable dictate. It suggests too, that as gratitude to Almighty God is unceasingly excited by his bounty, his mercy, and his forbearance to punish, praises and thansgiv-

ings, as the natural expressions of that sentiment, ought to be poured out before him in evidence of its existence in our hearts. For though he who formed the heart, has before his eyes, every emotion it feels, yet, our public acknowledgements, being a voluntary act of the will, must be acceptable to God, not only as a mark of zeal in his service, but as it is beneficial to our own minds, and may operate by example to the advantage of others. For these exercises in virtue, for these offices of piety, reason no less than religion, particularly points out that frequently recurring day, which is appointed for rest to that part of the creation, whose lot it is to labour. It cannot, therefore, be doubted, that it is the Christian's duty to keep a Sabbath, when the rational celebration of it must be so obviously favourable to improving the perfection of the Christian character.

The world has strong claims upon us, such claims as every power of the understanding is ready to enforce, such claims as every sentiment of the heart is awakened to answer, such claims, as (were it not for a stated return of the offices of piety) we might be wholly occupied in satisfying. But happily for us, (if we obey the summons) every person who professes himself a Christian, is called one day

in seven, to turn his thoughts to the Being who made the universe, the Being on whom we depend for every thing we have, and for every thing we hope to have, for all we are, and all we hope hereafter to be. While we are thus reminded of what we owe to the power which called us into existence, we are called to a recollection of what is due from us to those created Beings, which are below us in the scale of nature : we are particularly awakened to compassion for the infelicities of our fellow-creatures, and admonished to recognize those ties, by which we are all bound to contribute to the welfare of each other. We are led to reflect, that all mankind are the children of the same God ; and however the necessary institutions of society may have destroyed the marks of equality, it tells us (while rich and poor, high and low, are bending together before the common father of all) that we are all brethren : such recollections as these, are the natural consequence of a devout performance of public worship. But if public worship can so powerfully awaken them, what an indisputable testimony it is, of the advantages that may be derived from the attendance upon it ! To the rich it teaches charity, to the great humility, and to the poor it imparts comfort.

In my opinion, the observance of a Sabbath is of as urgent a necessity in this nation, and at this moment, as it has ever been in any country, or at any period of time since it was commanded. The great do not appear less in want of it, than their inferiors. If the hardships of the laborious poor demand rest as a cordial, that rest is no less necessary, though less desired, as a medicine to the luxuries of the rich. To those whose lives run through continued scenes of idle amusement, or frivolous occupation, relaxation indeed is not necessary; but to them recollection must be very salutary. Many there are among this description of spiritual valetudinarians, whose minds are neither averse to goodness, nor strangers to feeling; but in whom every spring of virtuous exertion is so completely enervated by unceasing dissipation, that they continue in habits which they cannot approve, only for want of strength to break through their chains: they go on therefore, to waste their health, their fortune, their self-esteem, and the dignity it bestows; impelled forward more by the fear of looking back, than allured by any very sanguine hope of finding satisfaction in the way they pursue. To these, frequent intervals of reflection (could they be prevailed upon to try their efficacy) would restore coolness and rectitude of thought,

and natural energy to the weakened springs of virtue. With such as these, an observance of Sunday, as a day of retirement only from the hurry of amusement, would be making one important step in the progress of cure, and the only one of difficulty therein. The mind once freed from the shackles of constant engagement, would be impelled to seek for itself some occupation: retirement must produce reflection, and the reflections of a mind naturally well disposed, and weary of folly, will lead to devotion. From the practice of devotion will be derived such peace, and such confidence, as must renovate every languid principle of goodness: perseverance in rectitude would become easy; heartfelt enjoyments would take place of satiety and discontent; amusement would then be attended with satisfaction; acts of virtue would meet every occasion that offered for their performance, and these would prove unabating sources of delight.

But the great, the learned, the accomplished, may suppose, that their superior information, their liberal sentiments, and high reverence of moral obligations, render unnecessary to them, the curbs of those civil, or religious institutions, that are placed as the guard of

virtue. They may imagine themselves liberated by their higher endowments from those restraints, by which the vulgar are held to the performance of duty. Be it so: yet, to that vulgar is due the rational example of piety. And thus much at least, most of these self-exalted moralists will allow in theory, though their practice is in general, diametrically opposite to their gracious concessions. But I do not believe that all who speak and act, as if they scorned every semblance of religion, are in their hearts so impious as they wish to appear. Thousands are borne by the current of fashion into the affectation of faults, of the actual commission of which they are in reality innocent.

But this is surely a most degrading species of falsehood, a most criminal pusillanimity. There is a degree of fortitude indispensably necessary to the existence of virtue. To the mind that is without this fortitude, every scene is pregnant with danger, particularly those which are fought with eagerness, by the young, the thoughtless, and the unprincipled: it must be from keeping bad company, that many believe piety to be incompatible with high life, and that an attention to the duties of Christianity, would sully the splendor of great-

ness *. It is by frequenting persons of this character, that many contract a fear of appearing religious; and this fear induces many a weak mind, first to hide, and then to stifle every sentiment of respect, which it may have imbibed for things sacred. Nor is here the termination of the evil consequences, that follow this wretched pusillanimity. No moral agent is exempted from that unresting vicissitude, to which the animal and material creation are subject. No mind therefore can long remain stationary in its progress to virtue, or in its decline to vice: it must every hour, either be rising to greater perfection, or sinking lower into depravity. It may safely be affirmed, that a person, who ceases to think of religion with respect, is hastening fast to that state of libertinism, wherein every thing commonly considered as serious, is regarded with contempt. The danger of sinking to a point so low, as that supposed consequence of a base timidity, should be sufficient to render us very cautious in the selection of those with whom we associate. Let it not in the mean time be supposed, because there are many high in rank, splendid in appearance, accomplished in elegant refinements, and distinguished by taste and polite-

* I mean by bad company, the vicious, and the profligate, whatever may be their accomplishments, fortune, or rank.

ness, who are impious, unfeeling, and profligate; that impiety, inhumanity, and profligacy, are the general concomitants of greatness, splendor, elegance, and politeness. People, who think they are, must be unaccountably prone to confine their admiration to the mere talents and acquirements of individuals conspicuous by their situation, without inquiring into their character, and without reflecting that admiration and respect are only due to abilities unstained by vice, and friendly to the cause of virtue. Had the views of such observers been more extended, had not their eyes been fascinated by the obtrusive glare of brilliant qualifications, they must have found even in the highest ranks of this country, examples enow to counteract the influence of those, from whose conduct they have made their too hasty conclusions. There may be found, at least, as much active virtue, and rational piety, among those of exalted station, as among an equal number taken indiscriminately from any description of people in the community. But vice challenges the broad gaze of public observation; while virtue, in the fear of being taken for hypocrisy or enthusiasm, retires to the heart, and is not distinctly seen, except when occasion calls it into action. Hence arises the belief, that there is so little connection between a virtuous or re-

ligious, and a fashionable life; and hence many have been led wantonly to censure, and others to shun virtue, from the apprehension of being unfashionable. I do not see why a person cannot possess every elegance, every accomplishment, every refinement of mind, and manners, without any necessary diminution of religious sentiment, or active virtue. It is surely a very groundless error, which leads to a belief, that goodness can ever render its possessors less acceptable, less popular, less amiable, or even less fashionable, than they would be without it. Goodness can never incur shame of any kind, or be in any one disapproved. Even those, who have it not themselves, behold it in others with respect, when it appears with that consistency, modesty, gentleness, and candour, which carry with them to the minds of beholders, irresistible conviction of its sincerity. Let not contempt for piety, be considered as a mean of obtaining reputation; for such contempt is generally affected by those that claim the least respect, when justly scrutinized: let not, therefore, the young, and the timid, blush to own, that they "remember to keep holy the Sabbath day." To keep it holy, is to obey God; and by rendering this obedience constant, they preserve in their minds an awakened sense of the reverence due to his

laws, and by their example, teach the weak, the ignorant, and the wavering, to "sanctify the Lord God in their hearts:" whereas, by a contrary conduct, they are not only faulty in omission, but are guilty of actual cruelty, in seducing the lower orders of the community from their regard to the Sabbath. If this charge of seduction seems too severe, let me ask what is the effect that a marked contempt of Sunday, in persons of higher life, produces on the minds and conduct of those below them? Will it not, does it not excite, first doubt, and then disregard, of the authorities by which it was instituted, and by which it is established a day of rest? Such a loss of regard to revealed laws, is to the vulgar a loss of virtue, and a loss of every comfortable enjoyment. It is an injury for which nothing can compensate to society, or to those individual members of it, who are the more immediate sufferers. In learning to scorn Sunday, they learn to scorn all authority both religious and civil. In ceasing to observe Sunday as a day of worship, they are easily led to use the leisure it affords, in riot ruinous to themselves, and scandalous to others. Whereas, to the poor and industrious, who are not within the influence of seductive levity, the return of Sunday is the return of joy: it brings relief to their toil, and comfort

to soften the hardships of a destiny, that scarce admits any other interruption of painful labour. This portion of ease and liberty, assigned them by God himself, must naturally produce gratitude to so gracious a benefactor, and excite in them a hope of farther favour from his bounty: this hope would induce them to seek its confirmation in that book, from which they have learned, that however lightly man may consider them, with God they are of high estimation. Through this assurance, so plainly, and so frequently expressed in Scripture, they will be animated to pour out their hearts in thanksgiving and praise. On Sunday, places of divine worship are every where open, and if they are entered with a spirit disposed to devotion, how great may be the advantages, which those who have such scanty means of religious information, may derive from the lessons, the psalms, and the sermon; which are more intelligible to them, as pronounced by the clergyman, than they would be, perhaps, if read by themselves. Who then would be cruel enough, if for this reason only, to cast contempt on public worship? When part of the day has thus passed in the tranquil consolations of pious offices, every, even the simplest, recreation will, to those who seldom know rest, give the most heartfelt pleasure. Delights would be found

in the social walk, the chearful fireside, that must render scenes of inebriation and riot hateful. The happiness of the world, (for as the poor, and the industrious who are struggling against poverty, constitute the majority of mankind, I must, in spite of the allowed perversion of language, call them the world.) The happiness of the world is clearly and greatly increased by the gracious institution of a Sabbath, while that Sabbath is used to the end for which it was ordained. But it may be asked, whether in reality the tradesman, the mechanic, or even the poor, do usually apply their Sunday's leisure to the purposes of religious exercises, mental improvement, or innocent recreation? In general, I am compelled to say, they do not. But why do they not? Ah! ye rich and great, ye exalted few, who give the fashion to our manners, to our morals, to our hearts, know ye not how much to you may be imputed of a nation's guilt? Even you whose hearts are free from vice, may yet, by negligence in your conduct, have been the cause of it in others: for the faults of those classes to which your menial trains belong, you have, I doubt, much to answer. Is not your influence irresistible? Is not your example rendered persuasive and fascinating by all the seductive concomitants of your station? If so, yours also is a very im-

portant responsibility. Could you hear without dread, the imprecations that burst from the crowd of liveried profligates, as you move through their ranks, to places of amusement, if you recollected, that these poor wretches were taken into your houses ignorant, and comparatively innocent too? That there, under your own roofs, while administering to your comfort, your convenience, and the splendour of your appearance, they learned that gallant scorn of religious fear, that contempt of decorum, which are manifested in the daring impieties that assault your ears at the door of every public place? Those who are most interested in these questions, will never hear them: but, as they are suggested by a conviction of the magnitude of the evil, and a persuasion that much of its prevalence is imputable to the negligence of those who most complain of its enormity, the reflection that your station is attended with responsibility, induces me to explain to you the grounds of my charges; and for this purpose, we will imagine an example of that progressive corruption, to which the poor are exposed, who become the servants of great families.

Suppose a society of indigent people, a country village for instance, three fifths of whose inhabitants are youth, the rising hope,

the promised strength of a succeeding age. We will conclude that these people are (what the peasantry of obscure villages are generally found to be) rude and ignorant, but honest and well-meaning: the children are taught, as soon as they can speak, some form of prayer, that of our Lord, at least, and, on Sundays, in imitation of their parents, or to gratify curiosity, they go to church. As reason strengthens, they perceive prayer is the end, for which their elders go to church; and the parish school affords them knowledge enough to join in the liturgy, and read the Bible. Their minds acquire imperceptibly a reverence for the practices, in which those, they most love, or most admire, are engaged one day in seven. They readily adopt habits, which are rendered to them respectable by the example of parents, and still more highly sanctioned by the precepts of the parish priest, who is ever an object of respect with his parishioners, if he shews an interest in their welfare, and supports the dignity of his character, by purity of life and manners. The children when they reach maturity, find themselves deterred from vice, by the conviction that it must incur punishment: they have learned the decalogue at school; they have repeated it at church, as the commands of Almighty God; and they have heard from the

pulpit, that to swear, to lie, to steal, to be undutiful to parents, to break the Sabbath, and to injure a neighbour, is to commit sins, against the perpetrators of which the anger of God will inevitably be manifested here, or hereafter.

Suppose a youth possessed of such a portion of religious information, and acting on the principles it is calculated to inspire, led by accident or business to the country residence of opulent magnificence: every thing he beholds there, will strike his mind with the united force of novelty, splendour, and gaiety. While he contemplates the luxury that appears to reign in the kitchen and servants' hall, the gay liveries of the domestics, and the trifling occupations which seem to fill up only a part of their time, the picture of his own scanty meals, his coarse attire, and toilsome labour, rises to his imagination in darker colours, than any in which he had ever before observed it to appear. Ambition and discontent awaken at the contrast. He aspires at the ease, the splendour, and the plenty enjoyed by a great man's laquey. Full of hope, he leaves the parental cottage, and adventures on the busy stage of this great metropolis. How soon will those religious principles he had happily imbibed, (and which in the shade of retired in-

dustry had been abundantly fruitful of good works) be lost in the tide of levity and folly! Behold him one of a numerous train in the suit of grandeur. By the station to which he has attained, he is admitted to contemplate the attractive graces of polished manners: will he not from the ease, the elegance, the dignity, which he sees in the behaviour of his superiors, be induced to think them an order of beings, who are blessed with endowments denied to the vulgar? When placed behind the chair of his master, at the convivial meal, how will his attention be awakened to every thing which passes before him! Every word that is uttered, every sentiment that is expressed, comes sanctioned to him, by the rank, dignity, and supposed intelligence of the speakers. No lively sally, no sarcasm, however sacred the subject on which they are made, is likely to pass, without leaving on his mind a deep impression. Perhaps a narrative of gay adventures, or giddy exploits, may constitute the amusement of the company during the time of his attendance. If vice have a place in the subjects of these relations, he will hear it palliated a thousand ways, denominated by illusive names, that are intended to veil its most odious features, and to soften its native deformity, if it do not, (which is not unexpected) recommend it to admiration. The

poor ignorant stranger hears all that is spoken with wonder; a wonder mixed, perhaps, with dread, and with delight. His attendance ended, he returns with his lately-acquired stock of new ideas, to the society of his liveried brethren. Human nature is ever imitative; the domestics ape the faults of their superiors; but in copying, the unskilful artist caricatures; and what is levity in the original, becomes vice in the imitators. In the change of scene, then, we may imagine that our astonished rustic hardly finds a change of sentiment. A repetition of what he had listened to in the dining room, again rivets his attention; the same images in a coarser dress, must find readier access to his mind, because expressed in terms more familiar to his ears, and therefore better suited to his comprehension. It may be no difficult matter for any one, at all conversant with the human heart, to guess pretty nearly the mental state of such a person, under such circumstances as have been supposed. His mind must be all perturbation and confusion; his faith confounded, his imperfect sense of religion tottering, and his respect of virtue lost in his admiration of those, who seem boldly to treat it with ridicule, or to regard it only with a gay contempt. Yet the acquirements of his earlier years cannot be forgotten. The precepts of his school

instructor, the admonitions of his spiritual pastor, the example of his parents, and his God's command, still press on his memory, and hang about his heart. Tossed between the different sensations excited by what he now hears, and that which he formerly heard, deprived by variety of occupations and objects, of opportunity of reflection, and unable to arrange his bewildered thoughts, he looks to Sunday as a day of rest; which will bring him leisure to think, to read his Bible, to hear instruction from the pulpit; which will bring, as he may reasonably expect, peace and comfort to his agitated doubting mind. But Sunday brings conviction of his ignorance, destruction to his hopes, and a ruinous shock to his wavering principles. He had been told that God commanded all his creatures "to keep holy the Sabbath day;" but he sees reason to doubt the truth of this information; since those who have better opportunities of knowing their duty, than either his schoolmaster or his parents, appear not to have heard of such a command. Instead of the leisure he expected to obtain, he is summoned to grace the coach, which carries his superiors to the morning rendezvous of fashion: there, while the crowded walk detains his employers, he mixes with a crew of profligates, who have gone before him through

the temptations which now surround him, and who are far advanced before him in the paths of vice. With this miserable society, he lingers away hours of tedious suspense; a state which is to the human mind the most irksome of any to which it is liable, and that renders the mind most easy of access to vice. No wonder then, that the exhilarating draught is sought by those poor people in the long hours of idle attendance, to cheat those hours of the languor they impose. No wonder, that minds, unfurnished with subjects of reflection, unused to find amusement within, and unprovided with occupation from without, should urge forward the seeming tardiness of time, by any means that shall be offered to their relief. Drinking and gaming are ever ready to relieve the vacant mind from a sense of its own vacuity; drinking and gaming aid each other in destroying the strongest faculties, in ruining the most exalted principles. What then must be their effect on the weak, the ignorant, the unprincipled? By the first, reason and conscience are subjugated; by the last, every malignant passion is awakened, exercised and strengthened. The effects of attendance on Sundays, so tediously circumstanced, as it falls on the domestics of people of fashion, are much more pernicious than those people could endure to believe them.

What they certainly are, has been in some measure evinced by the late call upon civil officers, to wait on Sundays at the different avenues to Kensington Gardens, in order to repress the licentious insolence of the attending footmen. That call seems to offer strong proof of the real existence of those evils which I have delineated in an imaginary character. We will now suppose the duty of attendance abroad performed: from the Gardens he returns home; how much improved by the company he has been in may be supposed, without great exertion either of sagacity or fancy. At home he finds preparations for the splendid entertainment, engrossing every thought of every domestic in the house. For it must be obvious to every one, that Sunday is that day of the week in which the servants of great houses have the least of their time at their own disposal. Being one of the two days on which the national councils are suspended, it is used as the most convenient day for the largest dining parties, and the fullest evening assemblies, by the families and friends of the nobility and senators. As the laws of the country shut the doors of the theatres, and other places of licensed amusement, those people who are at enmity with quiet, feel the compulsion of spending without public diversions one evening in seven, too heavy an

oppression to be endured. They endeavour, therefore, to mitigate its rigour by the brilliancy of their parties at their own houses. I confess, my own mind is not capable of discerning much difference in the moral or religious nature of a large assembly collecting in a private house, or meeting in a place professedly appropriated to fashionable entertainment. Indeed I cannot see that they are not wholly the same, except that admission is allowed gratis by the liberal proprietor of the private assembly rooms, which must be paid for at those denominated public; and that in the first instance, the domestics are as effectually saved from the toil of thought, as the most distinguished personages in the party on which they attend; whereas, in the last their attendance would be probably for some hours dispensed with, and those hours would be at their own disposal. We will now suppose midnight to have dispersed the assembly, and dismissed our young countryman from his attendance. Will he turn his attention to himself with any advantage? Alas! it is not at this late hour, and with agitated spirits, possible to reflect, or to seek religious improvement; weariness and languor have not left a wish alive for either. Sleep closes the scene, and shuts out the last chance of one bettering thought's admission to the mind on this day,

which he expected to "keep holy." Will the morning be more favourable to the hapless cottager? The morning will doubtless give leisure for reflection; but what comfort will he find in reflections on the preceding day? Will they serve to strengthen one principle of religion? Will they tend to confirm one maxim in favour of piety? No! they will rather tell him that the instructions of his early years were the errors of ignorance; that the cautions his weeping father gave him at the moment of separation, were the fears of low-minded poverty. He concludes from his newly-acquired experience, that greatness (which in his idea consists of wealth and splendour) comprehends all excellence, and is not restrained by the apprehensions which hold the indigent in submission to order, and to duty. Those apprehensions then are groundless; they are thought to be degrading too, because he supposes them only the appendages of poverty and ignorance. For he sees only externals, and of them only he is competent to judge: is it outstepping probability then, to suppose that these, or such as these, will be the conclusions he must draw from his superficial view of his superiors? And if such may be his conclusions, little more would be necessary to pervert his principles of rectitude, and to annihilate his im-

perfect sense of the Deity. And what may be expected to rise from the ruins of pious sentiments and religious awe? What but a remorseless addiction to vice, and an unbounded indulgence of every evil propensity. Licentiousness will be mistaken for a copy of greatness, and extravagance become the means to obtain distinction among his equals. Want occurs, dishonesty succeeds, and Tyburn terminates the scene.

At the day of final retribution, to whom will guilt be adjudged? To the seducers, or the seduced? Your own heart will answer the question to itself. You, my friend, will feel an awful sense of that day's justice, but not a terrifying one; you are yet innocent of the ill, and I trust you will ever remain so. But your part in life is one of those, to which is annexed high responsibility, as your station renders your example of widely-spreading notoriety. The advantages which accrue to mankind from the influence of good example over the human mind, we are all ready to allow; but the full extent and importance of such influence, we can never comprehend till the last day, when every heart shall be laid bare, and not only its vices and its virtues, but the sources whence they flowed, shall be clearly recognized. Then shall the Christian

triumph in the success of those exertions by which virtue was cultivated in himself, nor less rejoice in the fruits of his endeavours to communicate it to others. Think not lightly, then, of the duties you owe to those below you in station; and let not a fastidious pride seduce you to make light of the picture I have drawn of the consequences of that levity, and neglect of religious duties in the higher ranks, which is most likely to fall in ruin on their inferiors. It is not in the uninterrupted contemplation of what passes for grandeur, that the mind will learn wisdom, or the heart humanity: little else but a scenery of pleasure and fascination presents itself to the observation of those, whose life runs in the continued round of the circles of fashion. The splendour of luxury, the elegance of refinement, the accommodations and indulgencies that opulence procures, surround them on every side. Objects of an opposite description might convey indeed more salutary lessons; but the unfortunate occupy little of the attention of those whom fortune has highly elevated; they must be invited with the kindness of benevolence, they must be sought with the ardour of charity, before they submit to near inspection. Prosperity is ever forcing itself into notice, while adversity as sedulously strives to avoid observation. It is for these reasons

among the first duties of the station to which you are born, to seek out and relieve the needy; at the same time, that you extend protection to the innocent, information to the ignorant, and compassion to the wicked.

Your servants, as most nearly connected with yourself of any who are objects of such exertions, call for your warmest efforts of benevolence. It is not enough to pour out pointed declamations on their faults in particular, or the faults in general of the classes to which they belong. As you have had the means of higher improvement than they, you will pity their deviations, which began perhaps in error. As you possess more liberal intelligence, and more extensive powers of discernment, you are engaged by every tie of gratitude to God, to investigate with candour, the latent causes of their depravity; and if you discover what they are, to use your most strenuous efforts for their removal. When you become the head of a family, it will behove you to meditate on what may be conducive to the good of the lowest member of your establishment. Withhold not any trifling sacrifices of inclination, when indulgence might weaken their principles, by leading them to suppose you slighted any thing, which they regard with religious veneration: nor deem

those thoughts ill employed, or that time ill spent, which may be occupied in promoting the welfare of those, whose every hour is devoted to your service. Nothing is degrading to your dignity, that is the duty of a Christian. Charity is the first of Christian duties; and to stop the avenues of vice, and encourage the efforts of virtue, is the most interesting, the most important work of charity. Reformation of manners cannot be performed by an individual, nor effected in a day; yet it must be individually attempted, and the business of every day must be directed to forward the slow revolution. I do not say that a total change in our observance of Sunday, is absolutely necessary to the correction of the evils which excite complaints from every tongue; but I think that omitting some things which are done on that day, and attending to some others which are neglected, would be of material advantage to all ranks of the community. On the manner of employing Sunday, I cannot speak more explicitly than I have already done. Let the day be considered as consecrated to piety by God himself; and let those who so regard it, consult their own feelings for directions how to employ it. But as it is much easier to discern what is wrong in practice, than to say what is right in theory, I will trespass yet longer on your patience,

while I express my ideas of the habits, which are now almost universal among those, who resort annually in search of pleasure to the metropolis of this kingdom.

The places of public worship in London are, I am happy to say, attended by a very respectable number of the females of fashionable life, at morning service on Sundays. But if any of these think that going to church one day in a week, without other acts of reverence to God, is discharging the debt they owe to him, surely they are in a very dangerous error. Religion indeed lives in the heart, and we will suppose theirs of whom we are speaking, to be impressed with a respectful sense of it: yet it seems but reasonable, that some further proof of gratitude should be externally shewn for the blessings they enjoy (of which millions of their fellow-creatures never taste) than the mere attendance on public worship. But in a further review of the remaining part of this day, as it is fashionably spent, we shall not, I fear, meet with anything significant of reverence to that Being who "hallowed it." The greatest part of a polite congregation, are in general conveyed immediately from the church to the park, and the gardens; or whirled through the streets in paying visits. You will be assured,

I cannot pronounce the airing, the visiting, or the walking, to be either irreligious, or an offence to decorum. To persons whose minds are in habits of piety, none of these practices can be in any way injurious. But certainly to those, who give to the exercises of religion, only so small a portion of their attention and their time, as the performance of public worship requires, the dissipation of one devout thought inspired there, is a serious loss; and that there is little chance of such thoughts being retained, however wished, throughout the engagements of this day, those engagements offer but too strong an evidence. When the hours intervening between the time of divine service, and that appointed for dressing, have been destroyed, the toilet disposes of the remaining incumbrance of a Sunday morning; and dinner begins a new career of occupations: every fear of thought now disappears, for every possibility of its intrusion is shut out. The gay repast will be succeeded by the gayer evening party: so will this day, that might in idea seem irksome, be disposed of, without any very sensible interruption to the common routine of amusement. But to the considerate mind, is not this servile vassalage to dissipation, this terror of self, a fatal evil?

Suspect not, that I think society prejudicial to the interests of religion or virtue; every conviction of my understanding, every feeling of my heart, is in opposition to such an opinion. The precepts of religion are mediately, or immediately, lessons for the regulation of our social intercourse; as on our integrity and purity in the concerns of that intercourse, depends our acceptance with God, and therefore our happiness in this world, and in that which is to come. The highest orders of virtues, are those which are born, nursed, exercised, and matured in society. But if our love of society makes us afraid of ourselves, makes us forget God, and trample on the rights of our fellow-creatures, then indeed it becomes a tyrant, that subjugates every thing that is amiable or respectable in the mind it has enslaved. But I cannot think that love of society ever deserved to fall under such reproach; it is the love of dissipation that does the mischief under the sanction of a borrowed name. I could wish these two habits might ever be carefully distinguished even in terms; because in themselves, in their causes and in their effects, they are wholly different from each other.

I think the love of society may be defined philanthropy; but the love of dissipation,

however it may begin, in its progress generally becomes selfishness. Can it be love of society, that impells so many to seek the crowded assembly (which in fact is nothing less than social) when the very act is injustice to a large body of the community? When it is an injury to those, who have neither authority to repress, nor power to resent an injury? To their inferiors in station, and how many in station only, their inferiors? The idea of society must be fallacious then, the pretence must be false; let self gratification be substituted for love of society, and we shall at least be nearer to truth in most cases; for where the pursuit of dissipation becomes intemperate, in self every thought concentrates. To gratify this heart-worshipped idol, many a kind affection is stifled, many a friendly check, that conscience would oppose to the gay career, is repelled, evaded, or contemned: while they rush forward in pursuit of pleasure, they miss happiness, and destroy at the same time the taste for rational enjoyment: real love of society, therefore, must be among the painful sacrifices made to dissipation.

In remarking Sunday entertainments, I do not mean to infer, that there is any moral turpitude in twenty or thirty persons dining

in the same apartment: but then the dinner must be more than commonly elegant; its accompaniments more than commonly splendid; and therefore its preparation must impose more than common occupation, on the servants of the family where it is given.

Though I might not think the Sabbath profaned by the successive entrance, and retirement of a hundred idle visitors, yet for the reasons already explained, I cannot deem it well employed, either by the visitors, or the visited. The unremitting attendance such customs exact from the domestics within, and the more tedious and dangerous service laid by them upon those without, are reasons sufficient to induce a Christian's disapprobation of them; as they infringe on the rights of servants, by robbing them of the whole of that day which God appointed to be their own; and which reason and humanity would always wish to be appropriated as much as possible to the advancement of their welfare, by inducing them to employ the leisure it gives, in the improvement of their religious and moral sentiments: further explanation on this subject might prove tedious. What I have already said on the importance of example, and on the duty of affording due leisure to

servants on the Sabbath, will, I trust, enable you fully to comprehend my meaning.

For Sunday card-playing, I find myself less disposed to make allowance, than to any other fashionable mode of relaxation. Cards cannot be so fondly loved, as that their absence one day in seven could not be dispensed with. None but those who are possessed by an immoderate desire of gaming, can so ardently covet them; but as a spirit of gaming is one of the modifications of avarice, neither the impulse, nor the act, seem intitled to any countenance.

Sunday concerts are doubtless much less exceptionable in their motive, and less fatal in their effects, nor so much exposed to objection from the immediate consequences of the example they hold out; but neither are these, in my opinion, of religious or moral tendency. In one instance their effect must be opposite both to religion and morality; I mean that effect which reaches to servants, which must be the same in the case of every numerous Sunday assembly. To the fashionable auditors of such concerts, evil perhaps need not be apprehended. Music being the language of sentiment, and possessing a wonderful power in exciting in the minds of its hearers, those of which it is expressive, de-

votional music on a day sacred to piety, might be highly conducive to the purposes of that day's institution; but how much of such music is performed in the Sunday concerts? How little the generality of musical professors are likely to be influenced by religious motives of preference in their selection of pieces, I leave you to determine. The fine strains of Handel may often recommend parts of his sacred oratorios; but if a ray of pious hope glance through the mind on hearing sung, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," should elevated sentiments be excited by the sublime passages of Scripture which he has chosen, they can be only of a momentary duration. An invocation to Venus, or a passionate complaint of the power of Cupid, chafes away the better impression, substituting in its place none, perhaps, that are to be preferred to a total vacuity of ideas.

Let it not be inferred from this disapprobation of all the fashionable modes of occupying Sunday, that a proscription of cheerfulness, or of any enjoyment, that is not injurious to a fellow-being, or offensive to innocence, is intended, or in the slightest degree desired. You, my dear friend, know from experience how a Sunday may be occupied in a manner, which is at once useful and

pleasant; which secures to those under your influence a due proportion of leisure, and teaches them by example, how that leisure is best employed. You know that piety is nothing less than gloominess, that cheerfulness is nothing less than levity, and that an unremitting course of dissipation is a material obstruction to the attainment of happiness: of these truths may you never be less sensible than you are at this moment. But should ever, through the warmth and unguardedness of youth, an intemperate love of what is called pleasure, become so fascinating as occasionally to mislead your better judgement, and relax the strictness of your religious principles, still may you retain fortitude enough to withhold the Sabbath from the shrine of folly. The advantages of one day in seven conscientiously devoted to reason and piety, must be to those who have little other leisure for thought, much greater than I can describe. The influence of that day thus employed, extensive: though pleasure spread her train of seduction, and vice assail with temptation, yet, it may be hoped, that the first shall fail to entangle, and the last to subjugate; as the mind refreshed from its communication with God, and with itself, will thence derive additional power to resist, and strength to combat. You have already experienced

the pleasurable sensations that attend the genuine exercises of piety, and you can conceive, I doubt not, they have other sources of satisfaction, which flow from actions not yet within the sphere of your duties.

Suppose a person placed in a situation of responsibility, with a mind liberal, humane, and affectionate, possessing a clear sense of its high obligations, religious and moral, and contemplating the circle within her influence: suppose her beholding the numerous members of it, either led to virtue, or preserved in innocence, by her care, her precept, and her example: suppose such a mind so circumstanced, and then conceive what delight it must experience in such a moment: how sweet must be the soothing of an applauding conscience to such a person, while (with due humility) she passes in review before it, the happy effects of her pious endeavours, and benevolent exertions! Or admitting that some of those individuals prove unworthy of her care, that some may be ungrateful, perverse, or even profligate; yet, still she must have her reward, though the moment of receiving it may be deferred. The pang of present disappointment is softened by the assurance that better things were set before them; and while she regrets, she will triumph in the conscious-

ness of not having contributed to their seduction.

Here then I may justly aver, that it is as conducive to happiness, as it is essential to duty, "to keep holy the Sabbath day." The hopes suggested, the confidence inspired, the resolutions formed in one day, sincerely and rationally employed in devotion and reflection, are not to be quickly dissipated. After a short enlivening period, the day dedicated to God again returns, and it is again observed. Practice, we know, soon grows into habit, and this becomes so much a part of ourselves, that to act in opposition to it, would be in the highest degree painful. But habit in the case before you, would not only become pleasing, through the customary influence of nature, but prove at the same time a source of much greater satisfaction, when we considered that we were obeying the dictates of reason, and the commands of God. What can more powerfully conduce to our temporal, as well as to our eternal happiness, than a life of uninterrupted conformity with reason, duty, and inclination? Such a life must communicate to the whole character an air of goodness, and shed over the mind that gentle steadiness, that mild composure, which

gives dignity to action, and transfuses, as it were, into the body, the worth and excellence of the soul. May the tenor of your life, my dear friend, be such as to merit these blessings; such I trust it will be, then such must be its fruits.

be his friend,
 Kings; such I trust will be, when each must
 dear friend, be such as to merit their place
 of the soul. May the terror of your life, my
 were, into the body, the word and excellence
 gives dignity to action, and tenderness, as it

On the Dignity, Security, and Comfort, attendant on the Observance of Truth; with some Remarks on the Impiety, Danger, and Meanness, of its Violation.

TO truth, my dear friend, the great attribute of God, the immutable basis of all that is sacred, of all that is good, I am impelled to give the precedence in the discussions I propose submitting to your farther consideration, by a conviction that its culture in our hearts ought to be a primary object of our care, as its existence there is essential to the perfection of every virtue. Let us esteem an emanation of the Deity, that principle of rectitude which appears to have been imparted with the breath of life to every rational being: but let us at the same time remember, that whether the divine spark shall languish in the mind, or whether it shall spread into a broad and splendid light, shedding over every thought, word, and act, a lustre that shall endure to eternity, is left to the choice of man.

This principle, like every other of God's favours, we may habituate ourselves to under-

value, until it may seem to be annihilated; but we shall not exercise such contempt with impunity. The light we scorn to improve, may indeed be reduced to a temporary obscurity; yet shall it one day break forth in terrific splendour, to appal the heart with a view of its own criminal falsehood. For never can the daring violator of truth, with confidence or comfort meet that awful moment, when the fetters of mortality shall be broken. A moment which only to the true and pure in heart shall bring consolation and joy.

From your happy propensities I am firmly convinced, that you never will become one of that infatuated number, who, by setting at defiance the Heaven-imparted principle of truth, convert the means of happiness into springs of misery; nor by any temptation be seduced into practices, that shall make your life despicable, and leave a stain upon your character. Forbid such an apostacy from honour, every sentiment of regard for your dearest interests, and every hope of future reputation; forbid it, that animating sense of dignity which ennobles a mind unstained by falsehood, and unused to feign, and exalts it above the base maxims that influence the groveling multitude. On your mind's conviction of the propriety and value of such

sentiments, depends its virtue and its happiness.

Let not the possession or the prospect of any advantages, betray you into a want of that vigilance on your self, which is necessary to guard your thoughts and words from insincerity and deceit. The perversion of that instinctive sense, by which we are excited to reverence truth, is an evil of such magnitude, that we cannot be too solicitous in opposing every thing that may tend to produce it. There can be no species of dissimulation which has not a tendency to pervert the integrity of our disposition; and by habits of insincerity it will at length be radically destroyed. It is equally then, our interest and our duty to combat these enemies on their first approach, and before they grow into strength sufficient to impose that yoke which sinks us too low for resistance. We will first consider the prevalence and character of those vices which rise on the violation of truth, and endeavour to arm our minds against their influence, by collecting from Scripture and reason some evidences of their turpitude; and finally, examine if there can be found any plea for a departure from integrity on any occasion, or in any circumstances. If none such result from the inquiry, then must we resolve upon a perfect and uni-

form sincerity, whatever may be our temptations to the contrary.

In the dark catalogue of human vices, there is not, perhaps, any one so universally regarded with contempt as falsehood. Yet, paradoxical as it may seem, there is not, I believe, any other which spreads its contagion through so large a proportion of the human species. While with one voice it is universally reprobated, still it is every where practised with different modifications and with illusive denominations, invented to screen its deformity. So numerous are those who indulge in some favourite kind of duplicity, and fondly vindicate the one species of falsehood to which they are individually prone.

But this indulgence, however prevalent, is not more a proof of depravity, than it is of inconsistency. For other vices, the impulse of passion, the infirmities of temper, or the resistless force of native propensity are urged as palliatives; and frequently with a success that produces in those who have fallen under their tyranny, a temporary satisfaction with the sins, and with themselves. But of the fallacious arguments that are rested on these pretences, falsehood cannot avail itself. It cannot be imputed to any particular passion;

It peculiarly belongs to none; but then it is the soother and the slave of all. The power of natural propensity cannot be pleaded in its defence; for every tendency of uncorrupted nature is favourable to truth, as is evinced by the sincerity of children. Neither can infirmity of temper afford it excuse, nor weakness of understanding be urged as a palliative; because fools, like children, are even proverbially speakers of truth. Expediency furnishes a more specious ground of argument; and is, I think, generally chosen by the avowed friends of partial toleration to duplicity. This is not, however, in reality a better plea than any of the preceding: were it admitted, that falsehood could ever be more advantageous than truth (which would be admitting a supposition contradicted by experience) still the use of it could not be justified; for while we allow falsehood to be evil, we must feel that the practice of it is forbidden by that injunction which says, "do not evil that good may come of it." If falsehood have against it natural propensity, and derive no excuse from passion, or mental infirmities, nor can yet be allowed on a plea of expediency, how does it gain access to the human mind? Of what kind, we may well inquire, are its powers of seduction?

There are some faults, nay, even vices, that by seeming to partake of kindred virtues, steal into approbation, and impose on the understanding, sentiments of that reverence which it owes to the qualities, of whose nature they seem to participate: however violent in their operations, or fatal in their consequences, yet will they extort from their beholders a reluctant, involuntary respect, that mingles even with their aversion. Ambition for instance (which is in its excess a vice of very great enormity) when stimulated by power and unrestrained by principle, tramples on the rights of mankind, deluges whole empires with human blood, and spreads horror and devastation wherever it meets opposition. Yet, consummate ambition is not so offensive to the mind, as consummate hypocrisy. There is in the ambitious man, who openly presses forward to his object, somewhat that persuades us he feels himself deserving of the power, wealth, or honours, at which he grasps: but in him who veils his projects under the mask of dissimulation, who treacherously steals what he will not openly take, there is a tacit, but strong acknowledgement of conscious baseness, that draws contempt on his stratagems, and excites indignation at his success. Ambition may dazzle by its affinity to mental dignity, and its junction with great talents;

extravagance may obtain indulgence as a mark of liberality, and dissipation please by the gaiety and politeness to which it is annexed. But what, that is great, good, or agreeable, can be assimilated with falsehood? In my opinion meanness is the true characteristic of every species of falsehood. It cannot, therefore, but seem strange, that man, who is born with principles strongly averse to falsehood, should toil in dissimulation and deceit, barter his peace, his dignity, his own esteem, and that of others, for any thing that this state of vicissitudes can afford; when by preserving a reputation of sincerity, by integrity of thought and veracity of speech, he may with certainty obtain the friendship and respect of his acquaintance, and enjoy the desirable character of a man of candour.

That a vice so contemptible should become so seductive, provokes at once both wonder, indignation, and sorrow. That it is contemptible, is evidenced by the feelings a discovery of it excites in all who are not interested to palliate or defend the action in which it is found. From my own observations I have been led to conclude, that if falsehood be not always born of a contracted mind, it very soon narrows and debases those to which it finds access, and wherein it receives adop-

tion. Its effects in the moral world are similar to those of some trees in the vegetable creation; it has qualities that are fatally destructive to every generous principle, where its influence is allowed to predominate, in the same manner as those are said to poison every wholesome plant over which they extend their shade.

That falsehood must be highly offensive to God, seems deducible from reason, and from the evidences of nature without the light of revelation. We are conscious that it has pleased the parent of the universe to distinguish the human species from every other animal in the creation, by many faculties and qualities, that raise it to an exalted superiority in the scale of terrestrial Beings. As endowments of peculiar favour imply obligation to execute the purposes for which they were imparted, it is no less clear that to pervert or misapply them; must incur the anger of that benefactor who is no less just than he is liberal.

Speech, one of the distinguished and peculiar faculties of man, seems to have been assigned to him, as a benefit of high importance in his social capacity; as it proves essentially necessary to the enjoyment of the pleasures of

life, and to the alleviation of its sorrows. It must have been given by God in mercy to his creatures, purely to increase their comforts, and to soften the calamities which he saw fit they should be liable to suffer during their probation on earth. For his worship it was in no degree necessary. He who made the heart can penetrate to its inmost recesses, and be present to its love, its reverence, and its gratitude, without any verbal expressions of praise or thanksgiving. But without language, our feelings would have been but very imperfectly expressed to each other; and our sentiments, thoughts, and opinions, without this medium of communication, must have lain for ever hidden from human perception. Speech, then, which is to happiness so highly conducive, to improvement so greatly favourable, is a faculty for the enjoyment of which the warmest gratitude should be naturally felt, and the greatest caution excited, lest by an improper application of its powers, the blessing should be abused, and punishment incurred. From reason alone it would be learned, that when man makes his tongue an instrument of deceit, and the agent of treachery, he is acting in opposition to the divine will, by misusing a faculty imparted as a blessing to society, and applying it to destroy happiness and produce confusion; such being the

natural consequence of betraying the confidence, traducing the character, or misleading the judgement of those creatures to whom it was intended as a general good. Hence would arise a conviction that the observance of truth is of indispensable obligation, not only as an expression of gratitude for the benefits of speech, but also, as an act of obedience to him who gave it to be the interpreter of hearts. But, however sufficient reason alone may be to point out the paths of rectitude to the calm eye of reflection, it is too often overcome by temptation and embarrassed by difficulty, always to remain the unshaken champion of truth. To a guide so fallible we are not abandoned. Another light is given to us, perfectly consistent with that of reason; but which shines to direct us with a brighter and more constant ray: this is the light of revelation. To this let us apply for information, in order to make a sure decision on the nature of truth, and the turpitude of its violation.

In the manners of Christ, as described in the gospel, we have a perfect model of sincerity and undeviating truth; and this must evince to Christians, how far remote from every species of falsehood their conduct ought to be, since the terms of their salvation are included in a faithful imitation of him who

never swerved from the strictest veracity. But to my feelings, nothing I ever read in praise of truth, is so impressivè of reverence for it, as the eulogium pronounced by Christ on Nathaniel: "behold" said he, "an Israelite" "indeed in whom is no guile."

Nothing conveys a stronger idea of the iniquity of falsehood than that passage in the New Testament, wherein is recorded the dread catastrophe which followed its commission; and wherein the wonder-working hand of God is visibly raised to punish an act of hypocrisy.

St. Luke relates in the eighth chapter of the Acts, that Ananias and Saphira, two pretended Converts to Christianity, making an ostentatious display of religious zeal and pious liberality, sold their estate avowedly with a design of devoting the money it produced, to the service of their brethren, the professors of the Christian faith. The impulse to this act seems to have been a vain desire of emulating others of the Converts, who had really manifested the generosity, of which they were solicitous to be thought capable. But avarice combating the suggestions of vanity, they were impelled to fix upon the middle way, as the means of satisfying the contending pas-

sions. The plan being concerted between the temporising couple, the man presented part of the produce of his sale, under the appearance of an entire resignation of his whole property for purposes of charity. But Peter, aware of his duplicity, charged him with it in words of so much energy and power, that the man attempted no vindication; but falling down dead before the Apostle, exhibited a tremendous proof of God's wrath against his pretences to a piety and disinterestedness so foreign to his heart. A few hours after the death of Ananias, his wife, ignorant of his fate, appeared to fill the measure of their joint iniquity, by giving the same fraudulent account of the sale of their property, which had been before declared by her husband: as her guilt was equal to his, so was her punishment the same. Like him she fell, struck by the hand of God.

This story wants not illustration. Nor will I detain your attention to other quotations on the comparative good and evil of truth and falsehood; many beautiful and pathetic exhortations to simplicity and sincerity, in your thoughts, words, and actions, you will meet with throughout the Scriptures.

I am very sensible that your mind, after

what has been said, may naturally doubt, whether a vice proved from the highest authority to be so greatly odious, can be so generally practised as I have supposed it is in the earlier part of this address. I wish it were it my power to retract what I have advanced on this subject; but that certainly it is not. In this assertion, however, I would be understood with a limitation. Though falsehood is a vice much more generally practised than any other to which human nature is exposed, yet few are guilty of it in its darkest degrees of enormity; and I am compelled to add, that as few are perfectly sincere. It is against the apparently insignificant deviations from truth, that I am solicitous to caution you. I would wish you to be aware, that no falsehood, however trifling it may seem, can be practised with innocence, or indulged with safety, as it will most probably lead, though by steps almost imperceptible, to other and bolder offences. It is by committing faults without regret, that the mind learns to practise crimes without remorse.

Falsehood may be justly esteemed "the sin which most easily besets us," and is therefore that vice whose advances should be observed with the most jealous vigilance. That we may not only in ourselves escape the debasing yoke it

would impose, but also avoid the guilt of contributing to the subjection of others, it may be necessary to trace as far as we are able, the avenues of its access to the human mind, and the progress of its power over integrity and simplicity. In this inquiry will be found instances, perhaps, of people who though themselves superior to falsehood, are the unconscious, yet successful tempters that lead others into the vice, to which they in themselves had scorned to stoop; and the practice of which they would despise in others. Praise injudiciously applied, displeasure unduly exercised, offer to children and servants temptations to falsehood, the snares of which they rarely escape. To this early misfortune, this unresisted, because unsuspected mischief, may be imputed much of that insincerity which too fatally pervades every rank in society. You will not, therefore, my dear friend, object to our taking a review of the general means, by which these snares are inadvertently spread, and of the usual causes of their being unwarily entered; as you may thereby not only be guarded against becoming yourself an unintentional seducer of innocence, an unconscious corrupter of integrity, but by knowing the danger, you may sometimes snatch the weak and the ignorant from impending evil. As to promote virtue in

others, is the duty next in dignity to the cultivation of it in our own hearts, so to prevent evil is equally meritorious.

Lying is, indubitably, the earliest vice of youth; not that nature has any tendency to falsehood, but because temptations to its commission, are the first to which a child is usually exposed. To temptations so early encountered, what resistance can be expected? Yet, if the practice of lying be acquired in childhood, and by indulgence confirmed into habit, its influence will confine to mediocrity the virtues of maturer age, if it be not utterly destructive of every laudable propensity. Melancholy as this consideration is in itself, the idea of evil is greatly aggravated by knowing that children are frequently led into the practice of falsehood by those of whom it is the wish, as much as it is the duty, to cultivate truth and virtue; but who with liberal hand, inadvertently scatter the seeds of a poison fatal to the perfection of both. The evil here alluded to is not imaginary; the reality of its existence must be known to all who have had opportunity and inclination to observe the manners of early youth; and the means by which it grows into magnitude, appear to arise from circumstan-

ces fimilar to what I fhall endeavour here to describe.

Children are almoft univerfally ambitious of notice. Of thofe with whom they are familiar, they always feem anxiously folicitous to attract the attention: for this purpofe, they try a thoufand different expedients, watching with an interefted curiofity the effects of their stratagems: thofe which are attended with fuccefs, will be remembered with preference, and repeated with confidence. Children not unfrequently find that the minute detail, and lively relation of what they have feen or heard, raife an intereft in their hearers, while the artlefs obfervation, the curious inquiry, and the expreffions of infantine fondnefs, have not excited the fame notice. Unfortunate is the child (efpecially if it be a girl) who makes this difcovery, for it receives from it a fatal fhock to its natural integrity. You will fmile, perhaps, at the implication of a girl's integrity being more eafily shaken than that of a boy; but hear my reafons for the apprehenfion; and it will not, I prefume, appear unfounded.

That boys are not in fo much danger of becoming fabricators of falfehood as girls, may be eafily believed, fince they are lefs ex-

posed to temptation. Both sexes are born, doubtless, with propensities to truth, equally strong in one as in the other; but a boy has amusements and occupations which lead him from the nursery, the parlour, and the drawing-room. Talking is used by him, only as the medium of communicating his wishes or his wants; but little fond of conversation, he is not likely to try the powers of invention for subjects of dissertation. And hence it is, that simplicity and sincerity are found in the minds of boys much longer than they can be discovered in those of girls: on these circumstances, together with the more ready ingenuity natural to the latter, my reasons are founded for supposing them more obnoxious to danger.

But to return, experience having taught the little candidate for notice, that narrative is the most effectual means of obtaining the object of her wish, she will doubtless apply all her talents to profit by the discovery. But alas! her slender stock of facts must be very soon exhausted; the adventures of the nursery are told in few words, and its order and regularity admit not of variety in its incidents. What must be the resource, when the detail of nursery history is finished? Will the ambition which has been once gratified, be more

patient of neglect, than it was before it had been animated by success? The curiosity of the hearer at first, lent importance to the relation which then won regard; but that curiosity satisfied, in vain are the stories repeated. Indifference has taken place of interest, and neglect, if not reproof, is bestowed instead of approbation. The child feels the effect of her friend's satiety in her own disappointment; nor is she long ignorant of its cause. Youthful ingenuity fails not to improve its discovery of a superior's weakness, to its own advantage: her stories weary by their sameness; she therefore tries to introduce variety: her stratagem is successful; and from that success she learns the charms of embellishment. Thus she gains possession of a secret, which will enable her to support her lately-acquired consequence. Embellishment of narrative gives it variety, and variety engages notice. The imagination of young people is ever the first of their faculties that attains vigour, and there can be no want of colours to vary and embellish facts, where there is a desire to employ them. Happy were it, if no more than embellishment were drawn from that fruitful source; but as it is as ready to supply images, as to lend colours to adorn facts, it is not improbable, but the young essayist may pass from embellishment to invention, and draw

from a lively fancy most of the circumstances which shall be necessary to constitute her future relations. That truth has but little share in the detail will be easily discovered; but if that discovery be followed by a half-whispered eulogium on her vivacity, her spirit and her fancy, with the reproof of dissembled displeasure directed to herself, its effects will be to encourage her progress in fiction, and confirm her contempt of a principle, by the violation of which she finds her wit is displayed, and that distinction and real, though half concealed, approbation await the exhibition of her talents; little more will then be necessary to render her fond of deceit. Whether lies of malignity shall in future be propagated, depends upon the taste of the persons for whom they are fabricated: should these be pleased with ridicule, interested by tales of calumny, inquisitive to know what is said of them, when absent, by their equals, or done by their inferiors, dependants or domestics, the poor victim is then completed in corruption; the seeds of malice and illnature are sown with those of falsehood, and what can be expected from their fruits?

To this evil may be added another very serious mischief; but of which the consequences being less apparent than those of the

other, are not so commonly observed. This is the injudicious exercise of displeasure towards children and servants, by those who govern. Many people of the best intentions and strictest integrity, are very deficient in a due command over their own tempers; and suffer their anger to be excited by causes, in their effects perhaps trivial, and certainly free from moral turpitude. To avoid being the object of such unreasonable displeasure, concealment of every thing likely to awaken it, is attempted by those who are rendered by connection or situation subject to its caprices. To effect this, a necessity will often arise, not only of suppressing truth, but of advancing falsehood. Thus vice is practised to cover trifling accidents which are the effects of a venial inadvertency, or giddy negligence; and thus the want of self-government in the superior, is the means of implanting in the mind of the inferior, habits of servility and duplicity, which may be with difficulty shaken off, when their cause is removed. These are, my dear friend, two of the broad ways that lead to falsehood. From temptations of this kind your youth has been happily preserved. But some there are, who have been guided in truth and rectitude through early years, and who have, notwithstanding these advantages, yield-

ed to duplicity, at an age when the fault was all their own.

For the perversion of natural propensity, when confirmed by habit, and strengthened by false views of interest, there is no way of accounting, but on a supposition, that to the first act of dishonour, the temptation appeared under circumstances of instant urgency, and accompanied by immediate opportunity of commission. The exigency, the expedient, and the end desired, pressing at once on the mind, truth might be violated, nature opposed, and habit overcome, before reason could summon for their defence her powers of resistance.

The best minds are sometimes betrayed into faults wholly inconsistent with their principles and their inclination; but such deviations from duty are far from being necessarily followed by depravity. People who have failed, often rise from their fall with stronger resolutions in favour of virtue, with a warmer zeal in her service. Shall the surprise of one unguarded moment, sully the mind with the stain of premeditated falsehood? Surely not; a first offence, if viewed with regret, may be the means of future security, as it may lessen confidence and awaken caution.

For continuance in wrong there must be some other cause; perhaps it may be found in pride. Reason never fails on reflection, to shew our faults in their genuine colours, and boldly to urge an honest atonement for the mischief they may have done to others, and a steady exertion to raise ourselves above their influence, placing honour in repentance, shame in repetition. But pride is the enemy of such generous purposes; she considers sin an evil, only as it is followed by disgrace. She therefore points the sting of shame with fear of detection; and while she displays the terrors of deserved contempt, she promises in the deeper intricacies of falsehood, an asylum from their shafts. Reason, affrighted at the impending danger, accedes to the treacherous expedient, and to hide one faulty act, meanly weaves innumerable falsehoods into one broad veil of fancied security. But, happily for the cause of truth, the texture of falsehood is dissoluble as vapour, its duration short as midnight darkness: soon or late, the ill-connected parts shall fall asunder, and expose the culprit to a more severe contempt than that before so basely shunned. This I think may be admitted as a probable account of the causes of apostacy from truth, in minds which have been matured in habits of reverence for her purity. If so, will it not be asked, where

integrity must apply for support, when reason becomes negligent of her charge; and when taken, as it were, by surprise, she yields to the service of vice the powers that were imparted to her for the security of virtue? Where is the friendly monitor that shall warn of his deviations, the deserter from the cause of truth? Whose the authority that shall restrain his wanderings? Or, when sick of sin, where shall the balm be found to heal the wounds, and sooth the throbbings of repentant guilt? In religion all are found. The guardian, friend, and monitor of virtue, are found in the tenets of Christianity, which, while they add strength to moral principles, hold out promises of pardon and peace to every erring child that turns to ask forgiveness. To them apply therefore in every difficulty; make them your criterion in every perplexity of choice. You will thence be assured, however fictitious appellations or artful palliatives may bewilder judgement, and baffle reason, that truth only is good, and that falsehood must be evil: you will then resolve of the first to be ever a zealous friend, and of the last a no less determined foe.

By this determination, however, it is by no means implied that zeal in the cause of truth, should prompt you to be violent and

outrageous against its violators, or to distinguish yourself by extraordinary suspicion and captiousness in all doubtful cases. Such a conduct would inevitably be productive of endless contests and vexations; out of these would grow a habit of wrangling, and wrangling gives but ill impressions of female minds, and suits but ill with female manners. Besides, as it is much oftener practised to display fancied superiority, and obtain victory, than to confute error, or unmask deceit, it is justly regarded as a mark of pride, rather than an indication of sagacity. Let a perfect sincerity of words, and unvarying rectitude of conduct, be the external evidences of your attachment to truth. Those will give a dignity to your character, that will render your example far more useful to the cause you are desirous of serving, than the violence of declamation, or the petulence of dispute; for to condemn without due mercy, and to censure without the strictest candour, is to betray want of feeling, and ignorance of duty.

The indulgence of asperity and arrogance, even in the defence of truth, discovers no less a weak than a proud mind, and evinces the fallacy of those pretensions to superior excellence, which are insidiously implied by such a behaviour. Nor does the supercilious brow

escape notice, or the presumptuous implication pass unobserved; for as asperity of stricture incurs the hatred of those whom it affects, and as an ostentatious display of self-approbation excites universal jealousy, every one is watchful to detect the failings, and happy to triumph in the weaknesses, of the declamatory friends of virtue: this is a kind of retaliation that does not leave the man who provokes it any right to complain. He whose hand is against every man, cannot wonder that every man's hand is against him. Nor has he more reason to be surprised that he should not make converts to his opinion, a conduct so repulsive being more likely to create adversaries than favourers even to the best of causes. There is ever an inclination in mankind to suppose unnecessary professions of extraordinary zeal, rather the counterfeits, than the real characters, of heartfelt attachment. Whether this suspicion be justifiable by experience or not, it certainly requires no great sagacity, or the opportunity of a very particular intimacy, to distinguish the integrity which lives on the lips from that which is rooted in the mind. St. James has furnished us with a very concise rule whereby to determine our judgement. "A double-minded man," says he, "is unstable in all his ways." And our own observations prove

to us, that those who are insincere, are fluctuating in opinion, capricious in sentiment, and inconsistent in action. Whereas, on the contrary, a man who has a real conviction of the importance of rectitude, who annexes to the commission of every species of falsehood an idea of degradation, will manifest in every transaction of life an uniform steadiness and integrity. That his thoughts, words, and actions, should be perfectly consistent with the character he has chosen to support, is as essential to his satisfaction, as is the fulfilment of a positive engagement. He will not only, therefore, be tenacious of his verbal engagements, but mindful also of those tacit assurances of sincerity, given or implied by the general tenor of his conduct. He must necessarily, in the apostolic phrase, "be stable in all his ways," because in himself he would esteem fickleness, caprice, and inconsistency, a species of falsehood.

Were it only over the weak and the wicked, that duplicity had powers to extend its influence, I should have no apprehensions that your mind could ever be deprived of that spotless integrity which it has been tutored to hold in such value. But this, alas! is not the case. You may have already seen (and further experience will subject to your obser-

vation) great and shining characters, who lend countenance to falsehood, by stooping in some instance or other to assume its disguises. The lapse of a distinguished character is more highly criminal, than even the habitual faults of those whose talents and whose opportunities of improvement are confined to obscurity, as well on account of his better information, as of the bad consequences that may ensue to his admirers, from his faulty example. The youthful mind, glowing with the love of truth and virtue, is particularly obnoxious to injury, from the effects of such deviations. Its principles are shaken, and its integrity is undermined by beholding a person, set up, perhaps in the warmth of enthusiasm, as a model for imitation, acting the flatterer, the dissembler, or the deceiver, on the theatre of life. Arm yourself, my young friend, against this dangerous species of seduction, by the assurance, that no person, however exalted by abilities, (I respect your understanding too highly to mention rank or fortune) however adorned by talents or accomplishments, or even distinguished by virtue, has power to divest falsehood of one particle of that baseness which is inherent in its nature, and inseparable from its commission. The great or the good, who descend from the dignity of truth, inevitably sully the purity of their own

minds, and deaden the lustre of their merit ; but they cannot impart to the vice that degrades them, any portion of the elevation they forfeit. Reason, religion, and feeling, will induce you to regret the deviations of those whom you have loved or admired, but never to give approbation to vice, from regard to those it may have subdued.

I would wish you to be prepared for seeing the character of truth so artfully performed by hypocrisy, that for a time the counterfeit may seem as amiable as the reality. Nay, falsehood has arts, by the help of which, it may assume a momentary superiority to the unaffected simplicity of truth. But suffer not these, or any other discouraging circumstances, to weaken your attachment to it. Should the transient eclipse of truth lessen our reverence of its dignity, or our regard to its laws, any more than an eclipse of the sun should lessen our admiration of its splendour, or our gratitude for the benefits bestowed by its light and heat ? Should your approbation of imposing pretensions be engaged, or your contempt of falsehood be diminished by the speciousness of success, wait but the passing of its fleeting triumph, and then will you have abundant reason to rejoice, that you were not led by applause to imitation ; for then will

you see shame unpitied, and sorrow denied sympathy: contempt and disgust only are the sad companions of unmasked deceit.

That nothing may be omitted which may tend to confirm you in the strictest habits of veracity, I will now proceed to the examination of a custom, which in its consequences, at least, may be fatal to many a virtue. The practice to which I allude, is that called white-lying. Had I not good reason to depend on that flattering partiality with which you regard my opinions, I might fear that your attention would be with difficulty fixed to the consideration of a fault, which most people esteem too insignificant to deserve serious discussion, and too venial to be gravely reprobated. Your affection, I am assured, will induce you to bestow an examination even on my prejudices; and far I am from wishing, that you should adopt any sentiment of mine, which you do not find upon examination deserving of your approbation. Many there are, I am aware, whose practice and opinions are in direct opposition to the sentiments I shall deliver on the subject; but I am also convinced, that the popularity of evil cannot divest it of its turpitude, and that the more we are rendered insensible to danger, by familiarity with its cause, the more it becomes

essential to our safety, to be awakened to vigilance.

It is not against crimes of great enormity that I am most solicitous to warn you: of these few have opportunity, and fewer the audacity to be guilty. The hideous deformity of vice in its gigantic forms, raises a terror in uncorrupted minds, that secures them from its attacks, when made without disguise: but its insidious advances under the sanction of custom are not perceived; the latent poisons of countenanced ill are not suspected. Against the first, therefore, no defence is prepared; for the last, no antidote is provided: yet are evils of the most fatal magnitude seen to grow out of practices, which are regarded by the world without a fear or a frown. This is a lenity cruel in its consequences; and that a security ruinous in its effects. The impressions received with the quickest sensibility by a lively temper, are those, perhaps, of manners not far from licentious in reality, but specious in appearance, and sometimes even agreeable. That youth should be seduced from the paths of rectitude, is not to be wondered, when age and experience confound the distinctions of good and evil, and lull the wanderer into a belief, that what is found to be for a moment

pleasant, will ever continue so, because it seems innoxious, and therefore free from danger.

Among these promiscuous delusions, that which invests falsehood with the appearance of politeness, wit, gaiety, or address, is rarely exposed to censure: for will not the mischief when so disguised, be welcomed with confidence, as an object of approbation and delight? Will it be detected, when it dazzles in flashes of applauded wit? Will a young mind be excited to indignation at the sprightly narrator, who being himself the hero of his tale, frankly tells the ingenious fraud, the cunning invention, or successful stratagem, by which friends have been deceived, authority evaded, and licentiousness indulged, and this too while approbation beams in the countenances of his older and better-informed auditors; and praise, perhaps, of his gaiety or his talents, is whispered through the circle? I need not instance other cases of similar deception, by which innocence is unwarily seduced to imitation. A piety rational and sincere will enable you to discern the evil through all its gay disguises; and as you will ever, I trust, keep your mind on the watch, you must escape this species of contagion.

There is yet another danger to which your love of truth may be exposed; and this is laughter. An enemy that comes not, I grant, in a very terrific shape; yet its power over the best dispositions is too well known to require elucidation. But I trust, that however the amiable propensities of inexperienced innocence may be perverted by ridicule, the principles of a well-informed Christian are not at the mercy of malicious or idle buffoonery. The serious advocate of white lies is nevertheless a more dangerous foe to integrity than the sarcastic libeller of truth. In the first of these, there is a seductive affectation of candour, that with fallacious names and lenient phrases silences objection, and softens aversion. Should your scruples, however, be too well awakened to be lulled by these gentle opiates, an asylum from your arguments is found in declaring, that "the objects of your dislike are white lies, and must therefore be innocent." The decided air with which this assertion is made, will sometimes silence; but you, I hope, it will never convince. Let this axiom be ever present to your mind (and it shall be an amulet of efficacy to preserve your integrity invulnerable to every attack) that truth in all we say, is required by the invariable laws of reason and strict propriety,

without any limitation of how much, or distinction of what kind.

Believe not, my young friend, that blinded by an enthusiastic severity, I see no distinction in the degrees of turpitude which belong severally to the different species of falsehood. Though I cannot think that any kind of duplicity ought upon any account to be practised, yet I do not regard with an equal share of indignation every instance that falls under my observation; but never do I see it in any case practised, without lively sensations of regret. It is chiefly to the consequences of what are called white lies, that my most serious apprehensions are directed; as these consequences are always possible to every instance of deceit, every such instance awakens my fears. For when it is considered, that vice and virtue are uniformly progressive, that the human mind never attained to its brightest perfection by one effort, or sunk at once to its lowest stage of depravity, the reasons must be obvious, that dictate a scrupulous attention to the first and minutest deviations from rectitude: for how can we be assured, that when we have allowed ourselves to swerve towards the confines of ill, we shall retain the power (admitting the inclination be preserved) to stop or to retreat, before its boundaries

shall be passed? May not the same motives, which induced us first to deviate, continue to impell us forwards? And may not others arise, whose force increasing as our power of resistance grows less, shall precipitate us into vices of which the bare imagination in a state of innocence, would have raised disgust? If these questions require to be answered in the affirmative, may not the first transgressions of truth lead to depravity, with as much certainty as the first infringement of any other law, moral or divine? To resolve this last interrogatory, let us suppose a possible case of retrogradation from the paths of rectitude, apparently slight, and through the impulse of a passion by no means faulty in itself, but under proper modifications, both useful and amiable,

The desire, for instance, of being pleasing to our associates, is not surely deserving of censure; and though it sometimes occasions attempts for the effecting of its purpose, which may excite ridicule as an indication of weakness, yet none can condemn them as criminal. Is it, however, the less true, that too eager a pursuit of applause has seduced many an honest mind into the practice of falsehood? We will confine our suppositions to a single instance.

When this avidity of applause is united with a splendid imagination, it produces a restless desire and endeavour to shine, even on the most trifling occasions. Flashes of wit, and ludicrous descriptions of things, are the means usually employed to excite merriment and applause, and thereby to keep alive that incense of flattery and admiration, which are commonly the main objects of those who delight most in the exercise and display of this kind of brilliancy. True it may be, that exertions of this sort are generally founded on fact; but their superstructure is often raised by fancy at the expence of truth. In constant efforts to amuse, the pale of rectitude is too frequently passed; the regions of fiction are entered, wherein are floating a diversity of images, from the witty misrepresentations of heedless vanity, to the poisonous inventions of malicious slander. From taking hold of these last, many an ingenious fabricator of white lies has been restrained by humanity and good nature; but the benevolent feelings are not in every mind equally active, or equally powerful; and at all events, it is not good policy to invite temptation. In this case it is highly censurable to do so; for it is difficult to believe, that when native propensity has been perverted, and the precepts of religion disregarded, humanity and good na-

ture would have firmness enough to withstand the persuasions of interest, to oppose the suggestions of resentment, to resist the impulses of jealousy, or to check the workings of envy, if any of them should solicit, or urge the commission of darker falsehoods. It is natural that success should endear the means by which it was obtained: when falsehood, therefore, has procured gratifications to that vanity, which made it the vehicle of wit, it cannot any longer be regarded with terror; and provided it does not stab to death an unspotted reputation, or fully the credit of approved integrity, it does not seem very deserving of abhorrence. But let us not here forget, that to have lulled into apathy the horror of vice, is to have seduced from virtue the most vigilant of her guards, and to have disarmed one of her most strenuous defenders.

Suppose at this period of decline from rectitude, that circumstances should occur to impede advancement in life, that views of emolument should be crossed by disappointment, and the hopes of ambition frustrated by some one who happens to be engaged in pursuits of aggrandisement, similar to those which may constitute the employment of him, whom we have supposed to be accomplished in what are considered as the innocent arts of fiction. In

the course of competition, should opportunities intervene of throwing disgrace on the competitor by artful misrepresentation, or a well-directed sarcasm, might not our hero, versed in the ludicrous, by ridiculing some trifling imperfection, or by bringing forward a weakness in caricature, draw upon his rival such a portion of contempt, as would frustrate his endeavours, render all exertions fruitless, and defeat the accomplishment of the best-grounded hopes, and thus remove the impediments to his own success? Every generous sentiment, you may say, would forbid his availing himself of such arts, however desirable the objects they might promise to secure. This is certainly true; but, I fear, generosity of sentiment would not be found sufficiently inflexible to stand unmoved, when singly the champion of truth. Self-love, when stimulated by interest or ambition, has a sophistry which has charmed away the contending powers of better principles than that of generosity, if supported by no other motive. Self-love in the present case, might borrow a fair colour for its arguments from the previous use of more venial falsehoods. "If I have made even my friends appear ridiculous," might the casuist say, "merely to inspire gaiety, and where no views of interest could prompt me, with how much better reason

“ may I exercise my talent for ridicule, and
“ set strict truth somewhat aside, to draw con-
“ tempt on a rival, when it must so mate-
“ rially conduce to my own advantage?”
“ But those instances of deception,” says ge-
nerosity, “ were free from baseness, because
“ they did not forward your interest, nor had
“ you any sinister design in using them.” “ The
“ deceptions or sarcasm in question,” replies
the specious seducer, self-love, “ cannot great-
“ ly differ from many of the gay delusions, by
“ which I have so frequently engaged ap-
“ plause, and conferred delight. Why then
“ should I hesitate now, when the repe-
“ tition of what I have habitually practi-
“ sed without advantage and almost without
“ motive, promises to raise my fortune, by
“ disarming the opposer of its advancement?”
Now is it not clear that in the case here ad-
duced, the purity of the mind is already ful-
lied, and the energy of its integrity weakened?
It cannot be imagined, therefore, that much
more will be urged in defence of truth, or
that further arguments, unsupported by reli-
gion, should, if advanced, be successful to
prevent an act, the commission of which is
enforced by so many powerful motives as will
arise on the side of self-interest. The debate,
we may suppose, would soon be concluded in
favour of adopting the cruel expedient. The

white lie then assumes a deeper dye: the injurious sarcasm is thrown out, the ridicule is disseminated, and the malicious suggestion propagated. Thus it is that criminal temptation triumphs: other temptations succeed productive of still more atrocious outrages against truth and justice. To them the opposition, should any be made, will be still weaker, and the contest between generosity and interest still more easily settled.

You will now paint to your own mind the subsequent character of a person thus far receded from rectitude: should the picture in any degree resemble that now before my imagination, you will readily agree with me, that a practice, of which the possible consequences may be so fatal, should be avoided upon principles of policy, as well as of virtue.

Having thus far considered the ills which are individually to be apprehended from indulgence in the use of white lies, it remains to examine the most obvious inconveniences which may accrue to society from their general toleration.

I do not know any argument in favour of a partial use of falsehood, that would not be equally applicable to the making it a univer-

fal practice. The effects of fuch a toleration on the comforts of fociety, would be felt in their utter destruction.

Think not this assertion extravagant; a fhort examination of the effects naturally to be expected will, I think, evince its juftnefs. No perfon, who poffeffes a common fhare of fenfibility, can be ignorant how large a portion of terreftrial enjoyments proceeds from caufes, whole very exiftence depends on the mutual confidence of individuals in each others good faith and veracity: the indifpenfable conveniences of life reft upon the fame foundation. Had each one the liberty of afuming a difcretionary power of praftifing deceit without reproach, in what a ftate of fufpicion, uncertainty, fraud, and impofture, would all descriptions of men be involved? In the common and neceffary intercourfes of commerce, it would be found deftructive of the fpirit by which it fubfifts; and in all engagements of fentiment it would mingle continual doubts, which are the worft poifons to which the affections can be expofed. The beft and deareft ties of humanity would be weakened, as the focial affections of a benevolent mind would then prove fnares for the ruin of its peace. Where would the innocent-confiding heart find tranquillity? Or that of warm affection truft to profest friendship?

Suspicion is wretchedness to the liberal and sincere; friendship cannot subsist with one sentiment of distrust. How, in such a state of uncertainty, would compassion dare to flow in the copious streams of unrestrained benevolence? And if the current of that liberal source of comfort were stopped, where would the weak find support? The sufferer solace of his pain? The indigent assistance? Or the friendless patronage? Would not the tale of sorrow be heard with the indifference of unbelief? Might not the afflicted be scorned as impostors? And the jealous sensibility of blushing poverty, of unbefriended merit, be stung with the contempt which hypocrisy alone deserves? It would be impossible for any one to rest assured that they did not converse with deceivers, contract friendship with the vicious, and engage with villainy in all the transactions of life. To live in such mistrust would be wretched indeed; a state more comfortless it is not possible to imagine. Yet, that a society, whose members were liberated from the restraints of conscience and religion in the use of falsehood, must be reduced to such misery, can hardly be doubted. Who then may vindicate by argument, or countenance by example, the partial indulgence of a habit, whose general influence must destroy every advantage which human nature can only

enjoy in its social capacity? But we are told, that some kinds of dissimulation are necessary. This is given as an axiom that requires not argument either for explanation or proof. Considering it as a self-evident principle, its friends advance it with confidence, and expect a general acquiescence in the assertion. I shall not engross your time by endeavouring to controvert a position so contrary to reason, to religion, and to common sense: we are not, thank God, in so depraved a state of society, as to render vice necessary. Nor is it possible such a necessity should subsist amongst us; for it is neither imposed by wisdom, nor required by politeness. There must be somewhat unfriendly to virtue in the heart, when the head becomes an advocate for dissimulation. If the mind be regulated by the spirit of Christian meekness, charity, and benevolence, true politeness and sincerity are not only compatible, but utterly inseparable. It is true, that the vices and follies of individuals must raise such sentiments in the minds of their beholders, as could not always be declared without creating sometimes animosities, that would disturb, and even prove subversive of the enjoyments of particular societies. But a Christian of the purest sincerity may feel all the disapprobation which bad conduct ought to excite, without intruding upon others his opi-

nions. No precept of his religion commands a declaration of his sentiments, except in cases, where there appears a probability of serving the cause of truth or virtue. Silence, then, where the faults of others raise indignation, but where express notice of them would only breed contention, is authorised by discretion, and is therefore consistent with religion; and, as an act of politeness, equal at least, to the most refined dissimulation. While such a conduct is adopted by the lovers of truth, the most zealous of them cannot give interruption to the most censurable irregularities of individuals; much less can they disturb the peace of society; of which, however, if the basis be not virtue, the continuance must be transient, and little to be depended on. This clearly refutes the pretended necessity of occasional dissimulation, if we would always be polite. If the essentials of politeness be (as I am inclined to consider them) copies of the graces of the Christian character, then is politeness entirely independent of every species of falsehood. True politeness appears to be an assemblage of all that is lovely in human nature, refined by culture to a high degree of perfection: its constituent parts seem to be gentleness, humility, self-denial, temperance in all things, moderation and equanimity of temper, attention to the

conveniences or inclination of others, in honour preferring one another, according to the words of the Apostle. Are not these the most obvious beauties of the Christian character, and are they not literally those qualities that render politeness amiable? While these qualities dwell in your heart, your manners and conduct will of consequence be easy, engaging, consistent, and respectable. The natural impulses of your mind will then be the rules of politeness; and dissimulation would only serve to place you in a light, where you must both seem and be less amiable than you are, by as much as the counterfeits is inferior to the reality.

It would be vain to attempt describing every possible form, in which temptation to falsehood may assail you. Every species of affectation, every species of adulation and premeditated flattery, is a violation of truth, because they are all designed to impose fallacies on the minds of others. To all such little arts, your mind will, I trust, be ever superior.

I shall now quit this subject, entreating you to remember, that the design of all which has been said upon it, was to prove that the iniquity, the contagious nature, and the in-

herent baseness of falsehood, are greater than belong to most of those other vices, under whose influence the generality of people in the higher ranks of life are liable to fall. On this opinion, I found my earnest hope, that your thoughts, words, and actions, may ever be regulated by a steady conviction, that truth is indispensably requisite to the formation of the Christian character, to the dignity of elevated sentiments, and superior intelligence, to the security of social intercourse, and to the enjoyment of social pleasure. Consider every deviation from veracity as degrading to your own mind, injurious to society, and therefore equally repugnant to reason and to religion. From such conviction, and such consideration, a conduct will ensue, that must ensure to you the favour of Heaven, the respect of the world, and the approbation of your own heart.

On Content, as a Habit of the Mind essential to the Enjoyment of Happiness, and the Exercise of Virtue.

CONTENT is a virtue of the highest order and utility. Experience teaches that content much oftener flourishes amidst the hardships and pressures of indigence, than in the luxurious ease of prosperity. Hence it may be considered as a quality very little influenced by the external contingencies of life, and happily placed by providence within the reach of all who are sincerely desirous of acquiring it.

Content is a disposition of the mind indispensably necessary to the enjoyment of every blessing we possess; without it, we may be poor in the midst of plenty, and unfortunate amidst all the means of happiness. It is an internal irradiation of reason that disperses the unruly passions, and, like the beams of an unclouded sun, tinges with a chearful light every object that is contemplated.

That they, who possess the largest share of what are called the blessings of life, should

be those who are least contented with their lot, seems at the first view to imply something very defective in the formation of human nature. But if it be admitted, that content rises almost spontaneously in minds, which are so uncultivated as to be little removed from a natural state, then discontent will appear to be imputable to the indulgences of luxury, or to the pride they excite, rather than to any imperfections in the original constitution of our faculties. We are born with powers adequate to the attainment of those qualifications that are required of us. Discontent is therefore a defect and a blemish in the human character, for which no exculpation can with any colour of reason be drawn from natural imperfection.

Discontent is a transgression no less criminal than shameful in civilized nature, tutored by reason and religion, and improved by the refinements of education. Yet, how common it is, notwithstanding these advantages, to hear men repining at their condition, in the midst of every comfort and conveniency that heart can wish, and industry procure! While the savage, who is compelled amidst the inclement vicissitudes of rigorous climates, to hunt his food through unpeopled wilds and trackless snows, or to seek it in the boisterous

waves of a dreary ocean, ere the pains of hunger can be relieved, endures all with patience, and complains not of his lot. But to bring the contrast nearer home, are there not thousands ever before our eyes, who toil from the cradle to the grave, in obtaining the scanty means of existence, and to whom content administers the only comfort; while the thankless minions of fortune look with indifference, and spurn, as it were, at every good that courts their acceptance?

It may be urged that discontent is frequently found in the lower classes: but let us not too readily countenance the severe censures pronounced on the poor. Let us impartially consider whether they do not proceed from false ideas of superiority, excited and sharpened by a selfish hope of excusing the insolence or neglect arising from insensibility or avarice. If this be so, suffer not your judgement to be perverted, or your compassion suppressed by the unjust severity of such censors. It must be acknowledged that the labouring peasant or poor artizan, on beholding the ease of luxury, may turn an eye of melancholy dissatisfaction on the contrasted hardships of his own condition, and murmur at his fate. But, in such instances, the inquietude manifestly arises from the sting of a

transient and hopeless ambition, a short-lived pride that wounds only while the object that called it into existence, presses on the attention. The cause of discontent is therefore pride, and not the sufferings of him that complains: it is pride that chaces content from the bosom of industrious poverty, and it is pride that withers it in the beings whose seeming happiness is ignorantly envied.

A dissatisfaction that is produced by beholding more sacrificed to the vanity of one individual, than would be necessary to relieve hundreds from distress, is surely venial. And should a houseless sufferer, conscious of his natural rights, indignantly ask, on seeing the waste of luxury, why that subordination of the many, wisely constituted for the good of the whole, is rendered grievous to all by the selfishness of a few, could an inquiry so reasonable deserve censure? Or should such a one murmur at the injustice or negligence of some who hold the rod of power or the horn of plenty, could his complaint be justly regarded with anger? If his discontent be deemed presumptuous, what term of odium can be applied to theirs who are wretched and ungrateful from excess of happiness? I will not pretend to determine what is deserved by such as convert the means of good into poi-

sons of their peace and virtue; but I am certain that severity is not justifiable against industry or indigence, which is angered for a moment by the sting of dissatisfaction. I grant that the sorrows of discontent may sometimes proceed from causes which can neither excite compassion nor awaken sympathy; yet, is it not just that they should obtain a toleration even when they are causeless, since it is so commonly denied to them, when produced by the bitterness of penury and distress?

Were it not for the certain conviction that no circumstances are a security for the existence of content, I should blush to recommend to your solicitude the cultivation of a quality, that in a person blest as you are, has no better claim to virtue, than abstinence from food after a rich repast, can have to the character of self-denial.

Numerous are the benefits produced by contentedness and equanimity. From a contented mind flow an ease and cheerfulness of manners that are amiable and engaging even without other aids, and constitute the best ornaments of social intercourse.

But before I farther expatiate on the value and blessings of content, I ought to explain

what I mean by the word, as I believe, in the sense I understand it, it may be a quality more rare among those who are termed the prosperous and the happy, than is generally even by themselves imagined; but to give you a precise definition of it I find very difficult. The uses to which it is applicable are so various, the benefits which accrue from it are so many, and so diversified, that I cannot find any word sufficiently expressive to comprehend them all. When I have said that content is a habit, by which the mind is induced to look with a complacent acquiescence on every occurrence of life, and sedulously to extract from the unpleasant and inconvenient, that good which may assuredly be found in every circumstance of them, my idea of it will be but very imperfectly expressed: and when I have added, that it gives sweetness and cheerfulness to the temper, composure to the passions, and tranquillity to the mind, I shall not have described one half of the advantages which I am certain may be, and are frequently enjoyed from this undignified quality, this slighted blessing; which, like the common elements of air and water, is given to every individual who chuses to accept it, and like these elements, is equally necessary to the monarch and the beggar.

To compensate for this vague description of a quality, with which I would have you most intimately acquainted, I will beg leave to adduce such arguments, as seem best calculated to prove its religious and moral importance; and afterwards endeavour to give you such specimens of its effects on manners, as have fallen under my own observation.

If discontent does not arise from an ignorance of our obligations, as rational beings and as Christians, certainly the indulgence of it indicates, if not a contempt, a very faulty neglect of duty; a neglect that must proceed from inattention, or from too great a solicitude about the trifling subjects that relate to mere self-gratification. The first of these causes, every day's reflections may be expected to lessen; and the second cannot long subsist, when we are persuaded that such a solicitude destroys the happiness it is busy to improve. Discontent, like every other evil propensity, may gain access to the purest and best-constituted mind. But it is the indulgence, not the bare feeling of wrong propensities, that involves us in the guilt of acquiescing to them. To be tempted is not to be overcome. I conclude that discontent cannot be the settled habit of a mind disposed to piety, and enlarged by rational and

liberal principles of religion: for it seems hardly possible, that a person who is convinced of his dependance on the Being who created him, and informed by the gospel, what are the terms on which divine favour is obtained, should not be aware, that a dissatisfied and complaining disposition is inconsistent with his duty, and adverse to his interest. Obedience and love are the easy conditions on which we are promised the protection, the bounty, and the love of a Being, whose design in creating us, was undoubtedly our happiness. But how can we manifest our obedience otherwise, than by a ready and cheerful submission to his will? Submit we must of necessity; the merit consists in the manner of doing it.

By the wisdom of God we are so constituted, that the conduct which is most acceptable to him, is also that which is necessary to maintain peace in our own minds, and engage the respect and the affection of our fellow-creatures. Under these considerations, what can be more natural and more pleasant, than that love which is enjoined us? And what is so indubitable a proof that we feel it, as a lively gratitude for the favours we receive, and a reverence for all his dispensations, who is the giver of all good? These are senti-

ments which excite us to combat, and enable us to conquer every propensity to discontent. In order to keep alive these salutary sentiments, let us cautiously shun those desponding ideas that excite us to repine at our situation, remembering that every circumstance and incident that befalls us is foreseen, and appointed or permitted by omnipotent wisdom.

Resignation to the will of that power whose dispensations are inscrutable, is a virtue of the first necessity. A chearful acquiescence in our destiny is dictated by prudence as well as duty. It enables to go successfully through all difficulties, and is the surest alleviation of calamity. St. Paul gives a striking example in himself of this quality, even amidst accumulated distress: though happily you have not to practice the hard lesson of being contented under misfortune, as none has hitherto reached you, and in all probability none is near you, yet; it is highly satisfactory to know with what firmness and resignation we can behave when put to the trial of our exertions: what St. Paul professed he had learned, we may also learn if we chuse it. This great Apostle, after his conversion to Christianity, suffered, it is well known, every species of persecution, which the jealous and vindictive spirit of the nation from which he sprung, or

the suspicious apprehensions of other people could induce them to inflict upon him. Besides what he suffered from the malignity of men, he was subjected to those calamities which, being produced by the agency of the elements, are regarded as the more immediate work of Providence. But however great his sufferings, however imminent the dangers to which he was exposed, he met them all with firmness, and bore them with a pious and manly resignation, declaring that he had learned, in whatever state he was, therewith to be content. In his letter to Timothy, he considers this quality (of which he was so eminent an example) as of the highest importance among the obligations imposed on mankind. Godliness with contentment, says he, is great gain: and in another place he requires it in any circumstances short of indigence; having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. Conformably to these precedents, let us build our content on the same rocky foundation of submission to the determinations of Providence, that it may flourish through every vicissitude of life, not to be withered by the bright sun of prosperity, or rooted up by the storms of adversity.

The design of what has been said, is not only to prove that content is a habit equally

favourable to virtue and happiness, but also, that it is essentially necessary to the perfection of the first, and constitutes the very essence of the last. If I have been fortunate enough to establish these truths in your mind, I need not add farther arguments on the importance of such a habit, nor say that self-interest, as well as principle, will urge its cultivation where it does not flourish a native of the soil.

What remains to be considered, are the most certain methods of acquiring a quality, of which the utility is so much insisted on; and some marks by which we may know when the necessity of its acquisition is pressingly urgent.

Perhaps it is a matter of great difficulty for any person to discover whether their own disquiets arise from discontent, or from real evil. We cannot look into ourselves with that lynx-like penetration, which enables us so nicely to descry the faults and follies of others. Frequently we think ourselves unhappy, while all around us know that we are only discontented. But how seldom are any found, who can allow they deserve the imputation? Not that it is attended with an odium half so serious as belongs to many

faults, which are acknowledged without a blush; but we are conscious that the sorrows of groundless discontent are regarded with a kind of slight and contempt, and that the mention of them excites a degree of ridicule, which hurts our pride much more than it is offended by grave censure, or the marks of real disgust. Hence we are impelled to rack our invention in order to produce some reasons for our disquiet, which may protect us from the derision of others, and reconcile us to our own complaints. But however we may deceive ourselves, the eyes of our censors are not easily blinded. Artifice must always be eventually successful, and it is far easier to correct than to conceal a fault. However, let us admit that those who pretend to be free from the influence of a discontented spirit, suppose themselves possessed of a contented one. As a timid man in perfect safety and quite at ease, will boast of contempt of danger, and superiority to pain, while pain and danger are distant, thus in the midst of blandishment and delight, the fretful and querulous may think themselves above discontent. But if this is the only earnest they have of their security, they will find when the moment of disquietude approaches, that their content is like the boaster's courage, which dies at the shadow of what he professes to despise.

In order, therefore, to be satisfied whether we possess this quality or not, we should fix on a precise criterion of content. But where is this criterion to be found? Suppose we were to say, that to be tranquil and serene, when we can assign no just cause for being otherwise, is to be contented; would this be deemed a sure method of ascertaining the state of our mind respecting the habit in question? Were I to delineate the character of content in persons who, like you, are strangers to sorrow, and have hardly felt the touch of pain, I should define it a general inclination to be pleased and to please, with a cheerful serenity of manners, undisturbed by the trifling accidents, adverse to our wishes, that must occur to every individual in every station of life. If on applying these, or any other criteria to our minds, we find they do not correspond with the description, let the discovery stimulate us to make up the deficiencies. Content is a quality which may, like any other endowments of the mind, be attained by endeavour and perseverance, but chiefly by indulging no unreasonable propensities.

That there is somewhat in discontent derogatory to dignity, or lessening of importance even to our own ideas, is proved by the extreme repugnance every person feels to allow

that it is the prevailing habit of his mind. I do not recollect any one, however discontented, who could bear with tolerable patience the imputation of this fault; but I have frequently observed the arts that are practised to hide it from the world, and even from ourselves, as the source of our disquiet, or the spring of our complaints. Various expedients are adopted for this purpose. Few people, I believe, have not at one time or other, mourned under the pressure of a discontent, which they have sought to dignify with the character of sorrow; the forms under which it has solicited notice, and challenged compassion, are not more easily reduced to definition, than the features of the minds which suggested them; the vanities of disguise being equal to the diversities of feelings and opinions that produce them. One very common artifice is frequently employed at once to gratify and hide this absurd propensity. As complaint is the highest gratification of discontent, in order to indulge it, an affected superiority to the evils of life is assumed. After describing the subjects of our vexation in terms applicable to the greatest misfortune, an elevation of mind is pretended, that sets us far above them. "My temper (to speak the language of a complainer) is unruffled by these things, though my sensibility is strongly af-

“ fected. I know they muft be borne, and if
“ I had lefs feeling, I fhould be totally un-
“ moved by them. How would fuch a one
“ (pointing out fome friend) be able to en-
“ dure what I have to contend with? She
“ might murmur with fome colour of reafon
“ were fhe in my place. But I have expe-
“ rienced greater fufferings, and am therefore
“ taught to fee fuch evils as far more infig-
“ nificant than they would appear to others.”
In answer to fuch a complainer, might we
not ask, if the fubject of complaint is regard-
ed with fuch philosophical indifference, why
is it mentioned at all? Thefe are pretences
that carry with them their own confutation,
and which the leaft penetrating eye can dif-
cern, when they are the arts of others; but
we are each perfuaded that our feveral friends
cannot detect the ftratagem, when the farce
is acted by ourfelves. But what are the fruits
of all this mummery? May it not be an-
swered, uneafinefs within and ridicule from
without.

How different the effects of a contented
difpofition! befides that tranquil ferenity it
maintains in the bofom it inhabits, it never
fails to excite complacency in thofe of its be-
holders. There does not exift in nature an
object, the contemplation of which conveys fo

agreeable a sensation to my heart, as that of a countenance where the smiling chearfulness of unaffected content beams an indication of peace and innocence within: without this internal serenity, the characters expressive of the quickest sensibility will fail to please. Nor do I know any thing that so immediately locks up every source of pleasurable feeling, and freezes every sentiment of kindness, as the contracted brow and darkened eye of causeless discontent. These two extremes operate upon our minds with a similar degree of influence. By the first my heart is instantly dilated, warmed, interested; while by the latter it is as suddenly pained, and seems to suffer a contraction, which I can only attempt to describe by saying, that it seems as if it were thrust into an iron case too small to contain it. You may believe I readily seek to liberate it from so painful a confinement, by withdrawing my attention from the object that caused its uneasiness. If these effects of countenance were felt only by myself, they might be considered rather as a testimony of my weakness and personal prepossessions. But others are evidently affected in the same manner by similar objects.

If chearfulness and mildness (the common characters of minds disposed to content) can

win their way to hearts, which are locked against the influence of more estimable qualities, when clouded with an air of dissatisfaction or peevish fretfulness, is it not prudence to guard against a temper so destructive of kindness, so inimical to pleasure? Admit that to prefer the agreeable to the estimable, implies weakness in those who make the preference; yet, while the human mind is so constituted, as to seek what gives it pleasure, and avoid what gives it pain, it is evidently incumbent on all who live in society, to render themselves as amiable as they are capable of being. And surely least of all are they excusable in a neglect of what is pleasing, who are distinguished by extraordinary talents or moral eminence. In such it is an indispensable duty to cultivate those graces which give influence to wisdom, by rendering it engaging, and to extend the dominion of virtue, by tempering the awful with the lovely, and making it an object of affection. Nothing so effectually recommends to favour distinguished abilities or exemplary goodness, as gentleness, complacency, and good humour: these are the opposite extremes of what must be expected from the selfish and fretful character of discontent.

There is ever something impressive of esteem

in unaffected superiority to the sense of inconvenience, and something still more engaging in the endeavour to preserve equanimity of temper, where the pressure of disagreeable circumstances compel us to feel sensations, the communication of which could only serve to damp another's pleasure. Every human mind that feels at all must participate in the feelings of those who are dear to them: for any one, therefore, to harass by incessant details of groundless disquiet, the mind of those he professes to love, is a species of cruelty hardly pardonable. Yet such cruelty is ever the object of discontent. From a concentrated attention to self, the imagination gives magnitude to the minutest object of dislike, and sometimes will convert even what is pleasurable into a cause of complaint, which it pours out in words, or expresses in looks and gestures; and thus for the poor gratification of a selfish spirit, it disturbs the peace of those who are met for the sole purpose of social happiness, but are disappointed in their expectation by this wanton destroyer of their proposed enjoyments.

Such a behaviour in young people is intolerable, and cannot fail to create contempt and indignation. Age may plead a variety of causes in excuse of an irritable or gloomy

mind; but for youth, which has so many and such various sources of enjoyment, whose taste of pleasure is quickened by novelty, and whose hopes are unchilled by disappointment, we can admit of no apology, when its natural gaiety is clouded by discontent, and its imagination busy to discover the dark or the disagreeable, in objects whence it might derive innocent enjoyment and unallayed delight. How frequently by indulgence of this, as well as any other disagreeable propensity, do we change the means of happiness into the instruments of misery!

Let us, to illustrate this observation, suppose two imaginary characters engaged together in the same pleasurable scene; one with a mind disposed to see the good, and the other the evil only of every object which is presented, and of every circumstance that occurs.

Suppose a common friend of two young ladies of these opposite descriptions, should conduct them to some place of public amusement. It is immaterial where she takes them; the effects upon her companions will be proportionably the same, whatever may be the diversion she offers them. Every thing that is designed to give pleasure, will be received

by one, with that grateful chearfulness and visible complacency, which reward attention, and return obligations, while she thinks she is only acknowledging kindness. But to the slave of discontent a somewhat is ever wanting: the same amusements which please her companion, she beholds with a frigid indifference; the attentions which animate the one to gratitude and joy, are met by the other with a formal coldness, a ceremonious acknowledgement that shews more of constraint than enjoyment, more of civility than gratitude. The friend, disappointed of her hopes, is mortified, and feels a repulse of affection in this unnatural conduct, the more painful to bear, and difficult to conceal, in proportion as she feels the lively satisfaction and unfeigned gratitude so visibly portrayed in the countenance and manners of her more pleasing companion. Hence it is hardly necessary to observe, which of these imaginary beings will obtain the greatest share of happiness for herself, and communicate the most pleasure to her friends and acquaintance.

It will perhaps be urged in behalf of those who are cold to pleasure, and uninterested by what is termed amusement, that the same objects do not produce on a serious mind effects similar to those that are their certain conse-

quence on a mind disposed to gaiety. But may we not answer, that the efforts of friendship or of kindness to communicate pleasure, must affect every mind that is capable of feeling at all? I would not, however, infer that discontent is incompatible with sensibility; on the contrary, it is frequently the fault of minds sensibly alive: but a propensity to discontent is an indication of selfishness that contracts the most enlarged heart, and draws all its sensibility to one single object. Hence its feelings excite its irritability, and the awakened sense of pain or pleasure (which diffused in benevolence is active to serve and to relieve its fellow-creatures) serves but to torment its possessors, to weary out friendship, and to disgust acquaintance.

The same spirit, for instance, which chilled our young lady's taste for amusement, would have irritated and soured her temper, on being disappointed of these same amusements that she beheld without interest. Had the two characters above supposed been flattered with the expectation of any species of gratification most dear to them, and which, at the moment their hopes looked for accomplishment, had been withheld from them, that acquiescent spirit which operated in the one to promote the relish of pleasure, and give energy

to enjoyment, would equally contribute to preserve the chearfulness and serenity of her mind under its disappointment; while silent gloom, or peevishness in words or behaviour, would mark the unaccommodating perverseness incident to the opposite character. Thus discontent is not only the bane of enjoyment, but renders the most trivial disappointments as grievous as real calamity. Next to the mortification of meeting with such impediments to social festivity, is the consideration, that the least estimable of these supposed characters may in reality be that which we have found the most prepossessing; and that the superior qualities of the other should be clouded and defaced by sullenness and an appearance of discontent. What advantage can arise from the indulgence of this sour spirit, to compensate for the sacrifices that are made to it? These sacrifices are no less than the reciprocation of pleasure and the favour of friends. Whatever may sooth our pride and flatter our importance, by way of counterpoise for the resignation of pleasure, nothing surely can offer a compensation for the diminution occasioned in the affection of our acquaintance. In this case, alas! there is not a shadow of good to balance the weight of evil arising from our absurdity. Persons subject to this gloomy disposition may profess themselves satisfied

with their own sensations, notwithstanding their exterior deportment may not indicate internal serenity: but is it possible a mind should be at ease, that is ever in search of an object to justify complaint, and authorize displeasure? Whatever occupation or pastime is proposed to a person under the influence of this capricious humour, it is always accompanied with some circumstance offensive or objectionable. In large parties a croud is disagreeable, small ones disgust by their dulness. Much visiting is fatiguing; but to stay at home is melancholy. Does she go to an assembly or to any other scene of festivity, something will be found to discompose her. The company are of a rank so high, as to throw her into the back ground; or they are so much below her, as to impress her with an idea, that she suffers degradation by mixing with them. If there can be no objection to their rank, there may be to their age, their humour or character: possibly too the entertainment is inelegant: something, in short, to criticize is sure to be discovered every where. That which is possessed is not worth possessing; while that which is not immediately attainable, becomes an object of hope, of solicitude, of disquiet. Nor does the evil rest here; from this unrestricted criticism of things, the mind passes to as nice an ob-

servation of persons, conduct, manners, character, and other objects of a similar nature. There being somewhat in every one, obvious to the eye of censure, that somewhat will be remarked, portrayed and ridiculed: and thus injustice, severity, and perhaps falsehood, are among the fruits of discontent and self-dissatisfaction. The severity of censure, it may be said, arises from a worse cause than discontent; sometimes it certainly does: but I am inclined to believe it much oftener proceeds from a mind ill at ease with itself, than from malignity. If this be true, it ought to operate as a caution against every tendency towards a disposition which (however venial in itself) may prove in its effects as prejudicial as if it were malicious.

It has frequently been asserted, by young people in particular, that every one has a right to indulge those propensities, which, as they term it, hurt only themselves: but this is as falsely, as it is weakly urged. No propensity can be innocently indulged, that tends to lessen the happiness of others. Every thing that operates to diminish those attractions which render us agreeable to each other, is a deduction from the pleasures of that society of which we may form a part. It is therefore an infringement of the right which that so-

ciety has to claim from every one of its members, a conduct contributive to its general good. This I own, is an argument not likely to make much impresson on those who are uninfluenced by the stronger motive, how much it is their interest to please others in order to obtain their favour and secure their good offices. I use it only as an answer to that common refuge of the unthinking, "it hurts nobody but myself, and I may therefore do as I please."

Some there are, who when compelled to acknowledge the offensive and disgusting nature of a dissatisfied and unaccommodating temper, and how justly odious it renders them, will yet be so unreasonable as to plead their inability to reform it, by urging that it is their natural disposition too deeply rooted for eradication. Thus they submit to be tormented by an enemy whom they will not attempt to subdue. But supposing discontent to be the child of nature, and not of indulgence, could such a concession justify an indolent submission to so much slavery? Were we born with every passion, every disposition, every tendency pointed to good, and confined to rectitude, where would be individual merit? What would be virtue? It is to the resistance of evil that rewards are annexed; it

is conquest that ensures glory ; and it is perfectly consistent with the light of nature, as well as of revelation, to believe that the great Creator permits natural and constitutional defects and infirmities, for the exercise of reason and of religion ; thus enabling his creatures to convert even their imperfections into the means of virtue. Surely if we amend, reform, or change what is amiss in ourselves, our desert is much higher, than if we had been so constructed as to preclude the necessity of such a spiritual warfare. The virtue that is raised upon the reform of any evil propensity, is indisputably of more value than that which flows spontaneously from nature, without the trouble or exertion of its possessor : let no one then indolently mourn over their supposed inability to correct or improve what they term natural defects. The fallacy of such complaints is proved by continual experience. None ever attempted self-improvement, that was not better for the attempt. None ever persevered in it, that was not successful. Let us then rest in the consciousness of the strength of our own exertions, satisfied with what we have, and with what we are. For admitting that such complaints issue from a sincere belief of our natural debility, (which is not always the case)

how useless, how unreasonable they must be, does not require much argument to prove.

The ostensible causes of murmur, are the defects, as we call them, which we discover in our faculties, talents, or acquirements. Person and fortune also are not unfrequently sources of discontent ; but they are not often acknowledged as such. Now whether this dissatisfaction flow from the visible, or the secret springs I have supposed, is it not simply this? An unhappiness arising from feeling, that we are not severally possessed of every possible good in the highest possible degree. To any one, at the moment they are free from uneasiness on such accounts, it must certainly appear the height of folly and absurdity. May you and I ever behold it in this light. But to confirm still more our contempt of such weakness, let us attend to its ridiculous consequences, and the endless labyrinth of perplexities wherein it bewilders us. If I am to be dissatisfied because one person possesses beauty, another elegance, a third fine accomplishments, which I have not, I then must (to find peace) seclude myself from my fellow-beings ; and is this likely to promote my comfort ? But if the rank, the opulence, the splendour of others, excite my complaints, or render me dissatisfied with my own lot,

should I not blush to acknowledge such weakness? And would not this blush convince me that I ought not to indulge the cause of it? Suppose I were to lament and murmur because nature had given to some a stronger judgement than mine, greater quickness of perception, a more lively imagination, or a more retentive memory than I find myself endued with, should I not be guilty of great presumption? He who formed us all, endued each with such powers and capacities, as he saw best for the perfection of our virtue here, and the security of our happiness hereafter. And he who is infinitely just, cannot require from us more than the talents he gave to us are calculcated to produce. Am I to complain that I have but one talent entrusted to my care, because I see that another has ten? Certainly, if I attend either to revelation or to reason, I cannot allow myself to be dissatisfied. For I am taught by both, that the right use of the single talent I possess, may be rendered as effectual to the attainment of the favour of God, as ten or ten thousand; with this difference in my favour, that I have had the easier post assigned me, and have therefore cause to be thankful.

Daily experience proves that great abilities are not essential to perfection in virtue, or to

the enjoyment of happiness: indeed I greatly doubt whether they are often found to contribute to the improvement of either. But admitting it were otherwise, and that superior genius insured superiority of virtue and happiness; would that justify discontent? Surely not. As well might I lament that I had not the riches of Cresus, or that I had not the abilities of Locke or Newton. It would be thought a very contemptible sorrow, which arose from seeing others possessed of a larger fortune than myself: but though the object seems more valuable, yet I do not see how lamentation on feeling inferiority of talents, is more excusable than the other.

Admitting, however, that the defects we complain of, should arise from no faults of our own, the absurdity of all discontent appears in this, that it is a torment which must ever be active to the destruction of our peace: such dissatisfaction resembles avarice, and becomes like that, an insatiable passion, and must ever remain so. For as perfect beauty, perfect wisdom, or perfect happiness, are as incompatible with human nature as perfect virtue, who is the being that is not necessitated to see some species of superior excellence in one or other of his fellow-creatures? Could we imagine a being endued with every

beauty, talent, and accomplishment, that are distributed in such different proportions throughout the human race, yet if they were accompanied with a disposition to murmur, cause would not be wanting for its exercise; for still might lamentation be made, that its nature was not capable of those perfections which divinity enjoys. Oh! never, never, let us submit our peace, our dignity, our virtue, to the dominion of so despicable a tyrant as discontent. It steals from the prosperous that enjoyment which prosperity should bestow. It anticipates the evils of life, by magnifying mortifications into afflictions, and representing the smallest uneasiness that may affect either body or mind, as a calamity of the most oppressive magnitude. It is hostile to the growth of patience and fortitude; and by depriving the mind of these necessary qualities, it gives to sorrow a sting not its own. Were this unhappy disposition limited by any restraints, and confined by any principle, it might not have deserved my trouble, or your attention through so long a detail of its character and consequences. But, alas! I am too well justified in what I have said; for it mixes in every concern of life. Its effects on the manners of those it torments, are obstructive to every thing that is pleasing and amiable. The continual habit of watching to dis-

cover imperfections, gives to the countenance a chilling anxious gloom, to the voice a peevish asperity of tone, and to the conversation a captious and satirical turn. The whole behaviour assumes an appearance so forbidding and repulsive, that people are averse to form any connection with persons of this description, and feel no interest in their concerns.

Happily the instances of a discontented spirit obtaining so absolute an influence, are not very common: but those of which we may be witness, ought to prove a serious warning to guard against the approaches of an evil so destructive of all the pleasing sensations that constitute human happiness, and tending so infallibly to render us odious to society, and to exclude us from the participation of all its enjoyments.

Let us in the mean time prepare our minds for the encountering our proportion of troubles, since as they are the appendages of our condition, no one can expect intirely to escape them. This preparation consists in habituating yourself to bear uncomplainingly and without fretfulness, the little disappointments and mortifications, from which even so happy and prosperous a condition as yours is not totally exempt. Confidence in presumed but

untried firmness, is the usual prelude to weakness and want of courage to face unexpected trials. In order to counteract this pernicious presumption, exercise yourself betimes in supporting with patience the contradictions to your wishes, which you will infallibly experience: the more frequent the occasions, the sooner you will learn how to meet greater vexations without shrinking. Be assured, if your mind starts into inquietude, at the almost impalpable asperities of your present destiny, that you deceive yourself in supposing it would be superior to the real evils of a harder fate. Let not your imagination mislead you, by depicting future hardships, over which it represents you as victorious. As you know not the difficulties you may have to encounter, you cannot without temerity ascertain your success.

The most effectual security against the pressure of those calamities that may await us, is to rely on the protection of that Providence which orders or permits them for proper ends, and cheerfully to resign ourselves to his dispensations. The more readily to attain this happy state of reliance and resignation, let us learn to be gentle, placid, and serene, in our conduct and deportment. These are qualities that will amply supply, and leave no reason

to repine at the want of superior talents and abilities, and that will assuredly produce tranquillity within our minds, at the same time that they diffuse a mildness and complacency over our manners that cannot fail to procure the affection and esteem of all the worthy part of society. These qualities and their effects are alone blessings of the first importance; and Heaven has kindly placed them within the reach of all men that will conscientiously endeavour to obtain them.

I do not mean to depreciate what is great in genius, or shining in accomplishments, when I say that the want of either is no just subject of regret, especially when it does not arise from our voluntary neglect, or abuse of the talents given us. But we ought to consider them in character, as we do jewels in dress; that is, as things which are not essential even to elegance, though highly ornamental to that dress in which they appear, and marks of superiority which engage deference, while they do not excite arrogance in the possessor. But with all their brilliancy, they are not comparable in real utility and value, to that equanimity, or in other words, that acquiescent disposition of mind, which I have endeavoured to delineate under the character of content. Be assured you will find in it the best happiness

this world has to bestow²; as it is of all earthly advantages the most uniform, the most permanent, and the most independent upon others. Had it no other concomitant than that cheerfulness of temper, which is inseparable from content, founded upon rational and religious motives, that alone would be sufficient to render it the favourite pursuit and acquisition of every one that knew and consulted his true and solid welfare, and did not absurdly think that melancholy was an attribute of piety, or gravity a mark of virtue. I conclude with a fervent hope, that you may ever be able truly to say in the words of St. Paul, in whatever state I am, I have learned to be contented.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.